Helping beautiful minds

HEALTH Autism is the new multi-system disorder on the rise in children. PADMIT PATELL looks into the cause, detection and cure

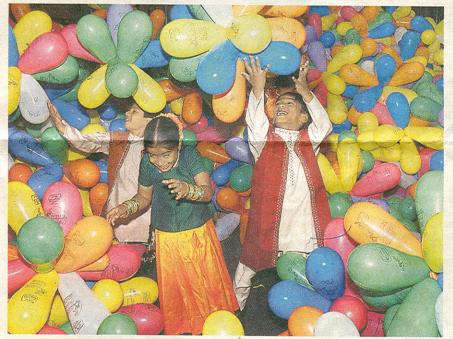
r. Praveen. K. Saxenaa does not recollect coming across the word autism during his MBBS course. But when things did not seem quite normal with his first-born, he began to delve into possibilities. It was then that autism stared him in the face leaving him and his wife shattered. Having approached well-known doctors and even resorting to obscure remedies suggested by babas and pandits, the Saxenaas had no choice but to accept their child's autistic condition. After an instudy. Saxenaa established a clinic for autistics in the city and much to his dismay the number of patients coming to him are on the rise. Fortunately, he can empathise with their parents with the sincerity of one who has walked the path.

A few years ago the word autism did not ring a bell. not even to medical professionals. Today, according to the WHO statistics, one out of every 500 children is affected by autism.

Autism, a lifelong developmental disability, manifests as a spectrum disorder - one that affects everyone differently. It is a multi-system disease, which could be neurological, gastrointestinal, endocrine, immune developmental and/or coupled with communication abnor-

Usually diagnosed during the first three years, it occurs four times more frequently in males than females.

The symptoms can in-



FREEDOM'S PRICE? Mercury-laced vaccines can trigger autism PHOTO: V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

clude abnormal sensory response, social withdrawal, resistance to change, difficulty with skilled motor functions and disturbances in the rate of appearance of physical, social and language

The causes for autism are somewhat unclear but research findings point towards a combination of environmental and genetic causes. The Institute of Remedial Intervention Services (IRIS), Chennai, recently organised a seminar in the city on 'Autism Spectrum Disorders:

The Socially Challenged and the Social Challenge'. Guest speaker Dr. William Shaw, Great Plains Laboratory, USA, pointed out that, "Studies in USA have established a direct link between mercury levels and autism. Oncemercury was banned from vaccines administered to children there was a significant drop in the number of cases of autism.

Besides genetic factors, seafood and usage of coal also increases mercury levels in the body. We do not just need to cure autism we need to heal the planet."

Says Saxenaa, "A growing number of parents, doctors and governmental officials are recognising a possible link between the epidemic of developmental delays and the growing number of mandatory vaccines. I am certainly not opposed to giving safe vaccines, I am concerned about the growing number of chronically ill children."

He recommends single dose vaccinations after an infant is four months old and stresses the need for safety studies on vaccinations especially in families with an autoimmui rv. He also seco questions raised by cademy of Medical ties as to why accepting thimeros cines, the very sar that are rejected by UK.

While health aut are slow on the up t cures are not visible horizon, it's the pa autistic children wl to bear the cross. Th tance of some paren cepting the reality stigma, lack of fam port, insufficient data, few doctors w pertise in this field. sive treatment and main stream schools tegrate autistic child erv day brings

challenges. The Parents Asso Autistic (PAAC) is a voluntary that can help provid port and information Autism Activity Cer Defence Colony in both mothers and cl to work with facilita bring out talents an ities in the child. Says ily Chari, founder I child with autism early detection, int tion, right methodolo mother's nurturing."

If there is anythin always helps, it is l edge. Better to be w formed than to be sorn information log o www.autismindia.com

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