

Helping beautiful minds

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

Dr. 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 in-depth study, 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 abnormalities.

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 skills.

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 autoimmune. He also second questions raised by academy of Medical ties as to why accepting thimerocines, the very substances that are rejected by UK.

While health authorities are slow on the uptake, cures are not visible on the horizon, it's the parents of autistic children who have to bear the cross. The stance of some parents accepting the reality stigma, lack of family support, insufficient data, few doctors with expertise in this field, no specific treatment and mainstream schools segregate autistic children every day brings challenges.

The Parents Association for Autistic Children (PAAC) is a voluntary organisation that can help provide support and information. Autism Activity Centre Defence Colony is both mothers and children to work with facilities bring out talents and abilities in the child. Says Ily Chari, founder of the child with autism, "early detection, intervention, right methodology mother's nurturing."

If there is anything that always helps, it is love. Better to be well informed than to be sorry. For more information log on to www.autismindia.com or email autismpaac@yahoo.co