‘Aging out’ of autism services brings big stress

Generated from News Bureau press release: As Children with Autism Age, Services to Help with Transition Needed

A new study analyzes the perspectives of adolescents with autism to identify challenges as they “age out” of services.

The findings highlight the need for social workers and providers to assist children with autism as they transition to adulthood, say the researchers.

According to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in 45 children is diagnosed with autism.

“The challenges of living independently, gaining employment, attaining postsecondary education, and building social relationships are greater for adolescents and young adults with autism,” says Nancy Cheak-Zamora, assistant professor of health sciences in the University of Missouri School of Health Professions.

“It is vital that professionals are prepared to assist with the transition, and that they have insight into adolescent and caregiver experiences during the difficult time of transitioning to adulthood.”

Cheak-Zamora, Jennifer First, a doctoral candidate in the School of Social Work, and Michelle Teti, associate professor of health sciences, analyzed the reported experiences of adolescents with autism and their caregivers.
They identified main themes of stress affecting families: challenges in accessing services, difficulties with adapting to transition changes, and managing multiple responsibilities and higher education challenges.

One of the study participants, a caregiver named Mary, related how the autism center in her community offered no support once children with autism leave. She said that she wishes services would increase during this period; once children reach a certain age, it is difficult to find help.

Caregivers and adolescents also reported a variety of strategies to cope with the stress of transitioning to adulthood with autism. Main themes included: accessing community support; receiving support from friends, family, and teachers; and creating opportunities for self-determination, such as making independent choices and setting goals.

“For families who are experiencing a lack of available services for their adolescent with ASD, social workers can collaborate in forming family groups that advocate for more services for individuals living with autism into adulthood,” First says. “Social workers should assist families with the coordination of essential services such as medical treatment, mental health supports, independent living, respite care, college support, and enhanced vocational support.”

The study appears in the *Journal of Family Social Work*. Funding for the project came from the Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau.

Is this drug a new way to prevent heart attacks?


A drug that stops blockages from forming in blood vessels could be a new way to prevent heart attacks and strokes.

“A arteries are living hoses that narrow and enlarge in order to regulate blood flow to organs and muscles,” says William Fay from the University of Missouri School of Medicine and senior author of the study published in *Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis, and Vascular Biology*. “Smooth muscle cells in the artery regulate blood flow by constricting and relaxing. However,
when chronic inflammation occurs in a blood vessel—typically in response to diabetes, high cholesterol, and cigarette smoking—the smooth muscle cells in the walls of arteries change their behavior.

“They gradually accumulate inside the artery and narrow the blood vessel. In the case of coronary arteries, which supply blood to heart muscle cells, this process produces blockages that can lead to a heart attack.”

Plasminogen activator inhibitor-1, or PAI-1, is a naturally occurring protein within blood vessels that controls cell migration. With diseases such as diabetes and obesity, PAI-1 over-accumulates in blood vessels. This promotes blockage formation.

This process occurs not only in arteries, but also in vein grafts in patients who have undergone coronary artery bypass graft surgery.

**Decreased blockages by 50%**

Fay’s research team studied PAI-039, also known as tiplaxtinin, an investigational drug not yet used to treat humans. The researchers found that PAI-039 inhibited the migration of cultured human coronary artery smooth muscle cells, and prevented the development of blockages in arteries and bypass grafts in mice.

“We found that PAI-039 decreased blockage formation by about 50 percent, which is a powerful effect in the models we used,” says Fay, who also serves as a research scientist at the Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans’ Hospital in Columbia, Missouri. “In addition to reducing vascular blockages, inhibiting PAI-1 also produces a blood thinning effect that prevents the blood clots that trigger most heart attacks and strokes.”

Fay hopes that if future studies are successful, PAI-039 or similar drugs could be used to prevent blockages in arteries and bypass grafts.

“I don’t think there will be any one ‘magic pill’ that prevents arterial diseases, especially for those with other high-risk conditions,” Fay says. “However, perhaps someday a PAI-1 inhibitor can be used in combination with other approaches such as proper diet and exercise, aspirin, and cholesterol medications to prevent blood vessel blockages and reduce heart attack and stroke risk.”

The National Institutes of Health and the Department of Veterans Affairs supported the study.
Dispute Settled Over Degree Offerings From Missouri Schools

ST. LOUIS (AP) – A recent report by a Missouri task force says the state’s public universities and community colleges should not stray from the types of degrees their institutions can grant unless they have a good reason to do so.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reports that Missouri lawmakers asked the task force, made up of 16 state higher education leaders, to address the issue after a dispute between the University of Missouri System and Missouri State University.

Missouri State officials were hoping to change a statute that controls which doctoral programs the Springfield university can grant and prohibits it from offering professional degrees, including medical and law.

The report says research and professional degrees are exclusively the role of the four University of Missouri schools and that 12 community colleges should stick to granting associate degrees and certificates.

Mumps spreading on college campuses

Caroline Brown, a sophomore at the University of Missouri, got a fever over Thanksgiving break. Soon it became painful to bite down, and her cheek began to swell. A trip to her physician confirmed it: she had the mumps.
“Mumps kind of sounds like this archaic thing,” Brown said. “We get vaccinated for it; it just sounds like something that nobody gets. So I just didn’t think that it was possible that I would get it.”

But mumps is back, and is having its worst year in a decade, fueled in part by its spread on college campuses. Since classes began at the University of Missouri in August, school officials have identified 193 mumps cases on campus. Nationwide, more than 4,000 cases have been reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — nearly triple the number in 2015 and the largest increase in 10 years.

Some public health officials are asking questions about the vaccine protocol.

Dr. Susan Even, executive director of the University of Missouri’s Student Health Center, said she hasn’t seen anything like the current outbreak in her 31 years at the school. She said all of the students her team treated for mumps had two MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccine doses — a school requirement — but they got sick anyway.

“The fact that we have mumps showing up in highly immunized populations likely reflects something about the effectiveness of the vaccine,” Even said.

Outbreaks are affecting several other universities. More than 300 cases were reported at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and students at universities such as Iowa State, Tufts and Harvard have also had mumps.

The largest current outbreak is in Arkansas, which reports over 2,000 cases among school-age children and adults throughout the state since August this year.

Mumps is no longer particularly common, and it rarely causes serious complications. However, there is no treatment for the viral illness except rest. Symptoms include swelling in the cheek and neck, fever and pain in the jaw, which can be alleviated by over-the-counter medications.

The symptoms might feel like flu at first, “but the characteristic that we look for is pain in the jaw and cheek area and swelling,” Even said.

Dr. Janell Routh, a medical epidemiologist for the CDC who specializes in mumps, said it’s not surprising that outbreaks are occurring on college campuses, where students often live in close quarters, eat together and party together.

“College campuses provide that perfect medium for the spread of the mumps virus,” Routh said. “We know a lot of the behaviors that take place on college campuses are amenable to the spread.”

The outbreak in Arkansas has been affecting a more diverse population — school-age children and adults.
Dr. Dirk Haselow, the state’s epidemiologist and medical director of outbreak response, said the state’s health department has been holding clinics in places like churches, and schools to dispense the MMR vaccine.

“We have people working 12 hours a day, seven days a week for months trying to get this under control. It’s not for lack of effort,” Haselow said.

The severity of the outbreak has Haselow questioning the vaccine dosing protocol.

More than 90 percent of affected children and 30 to 40 percent of affected adults were vaccinated, according to state data. But Haselow said those adult vaccination rates are typical and don’t explain the outbreak.

“If you look at MMR vaccination coverage rates in adults, that’s middle of the road,” Haselow said. “It was incorporated into the childhood immunization schedule in the ’80s.”

Normally, people receive only two doses of the vaccine, but in Arkansas and also at the University of Missouri, officials are now recommending a third.

It’s not clear whether a third dose is effective in preventing the spread of mumps. The CDC has not made a recommendation, stating in an online report from July: “The effectiveness of a third dose of MMR vaccine has not been established, but rationale exists for its use in outbreak settings.” However, both the state of Arkansas and the University of Missouri are hoping third doses will help stem the outbreaks.

Haselow said he also worries there may be something about this particular outbreak that is making the mumps vaccine less effective against it.

“Despite all that effort, we still continue to see this outbreak worsen. And we are concerned that the outbreak may indicate something unusual,” he said.

He explained that the mumps vaccine was developed in the 1960s using one specific strain of mumps, and now some of the cases showing up in Arkansas are a different strain.

“We are wondering whether the circulating strains have evolved away from the vaccine,” Haselow said.

Researchers at the CDC aren’t sure they agree yet, a spokesperson said, but they will examine the data from the Arkansas outbreak once it is declared over. Haselow said that some samples have already been collected and sent to the CDC for analysis.

Haslow said that the mumps vaccine is still the most effective protection against mumps infections. It makes it less likely you will contract mumps and greatly reduces the chances for severe complications if you do.
Complications are rare but include things like swelling in the testicles, meningitis and deafness that can have lasting implications.

“Vaccines reduce your risk of mumps ninefold. We’re 100 percent positive that these vaccines are preventing the severe manifestations of mumps,” Haselow said. “So they are helping, but they’re not perfect.”

Back at the University of Missouri, some students are treating the outbreak as a joke referring to the last month or so as “Mumps 2k16.”

Brown said that she knows several students who have or had the mumps, and she has even more friends who say they wish they could get mumps before finals.

“I definitely wouldn’t wish it on anyone, but if people would rather have mumps than take their accounting final, then I guess I can’t blame them,” Brown said.

Let’s make America great for all

Yes, bring my country back. Where did it go?

Bring back the days when labor unions had clout, when workers knew the difference between their own interests and those of CEOs earning a thousand times more, the days when we negotiated for better health care and a guaranteed retirement pension, when we knew the hidden agenda of politicians promising lower taxes was to lower taxes for themselves and the people pulling their strings. Bring back the days when a “strike” was a legitimate strategy for bettering people’s lives.

Bring back the days of the Cold War, when the nation we used to call the Soviet Union was an enemy and not a country manipulating our electoral process to further the interests of the autocrats who run that country, those days when our leaders were clamoring to tear down a “wall” and not build one.

Bring back the days when most decent people acknowledged the necessary work of civil rights workers, the times when most of us felt that civil rights for black citizens were civil rights for everyone.

The days when University of Missouri students pressured administrators to divest from businesses working in apartheid South Africa are long gone, but we need to call them back because those pressures helped lead to the end of legal segregation in that part of the world.
Bring back the times before the “end of welfare as we know it” or “three strikes and you’re out.” We long for the days before NAFTA was advertised as a benefit to every living thing under the sun.

Bring back the days when Hillary Clinton was a U.S. senator working for clean air, women’s rights and health care rather than a blindly ambitious presidential candidate whose prime goal was to “get there” even if it meant bending the rules and at times betraying the ideas behind the policy she advocated.

Bring back the days when political knowledge, eloquence and non-declarative sentences were objects of admiration by the populace and not a reason for accusations of arrogance, the days when clear writing and thinking did not come down to a single word, “huge,” or two- to four-word insults such as “such a nasty woman.”

Bring back the days when a megalomaniac who abuses women by bragging about how he was allowed to grab “p---y” would never dream about becoming president and to think of him as a major leader would be laughable or disgusting or both.

Bring back the days when bragging about the size of your member was not something presidents did.

Bring those days back when a false news story about a child sex ring headed by a prominent public figure would be relegated to rags, like the National Enquirer, that people read as they wait and chuckle in grocery store checkout lines, days when the headline “Woman With Two Heads Eats her Husband and Three Children” is never taken seriously, much less acted on.

Bring back the times when “tweeting” was something birds did.

Bring back the days when criticizing “political correctness” was not a license for bigotry.

Bring them back, those times when we witnessed those young soldiers who died in a senseless war coming home in body bags as mothers mourned openly on our television screens and young civilian men worried about having to fight and die in that war. When “thank you for your service” was not a hypocritical way to relieve guilt. When more than a tiny percentage of Americans shared the burden of carrying out a war policy devised by powerful chicken hawks who were never in the military.

Bring back the days when equality was an ideal we all upheld and worked for.

As 2017 approaches and our new president is inaugurated, we need to remind him to make America great for all.

*Michael Ugarte is professor emeritus of the Romance Languages Department of the University of Missouri.*