

Why hyping ‘click-worthy’ autism research can do more harm than good

Click-worthy health and science headlines are an essential currency in today’s media world. When they pertain to autism, they might include phrases like “[groundbreaking trial](#),” “[offer hope](#)” or “[game-changer](#).”

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This attention is a mixed blessing. It can encourage talented scientists to design research to better understand autism. It also generates support for advocacy efforts and research funding.

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However, there is a dark side to this almost insatiable interest in autism science news: it has created an environment that encourages media hype of early, preliminary findings, with headlines that are tantalizing but not always accurate. The hype machine also too often promotes mediocre or even bad science, which ultimately puts people with autism at risk.

In the worst scenarios, families inspired by media coverage may pursue treatments that are both ineffective and unsafe. This has been the case with MDMA, or 3,4-methyldioxymethamphetamine, otherwise known as ecstasy, [to treat social anxiety in autistic adults](#). Much media coverage of this experimental treatment failed to report that the drug is [neurotoxic in animal models and humans](#).

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The [false hope](#) of MDMA might have led some in the [autism community to pursue an illegal](#)—and, more importantly, potentially lethal—intervention.

Read full, original post: [Hyping Autism Research “News” Is a Disservice to People with Autism](#)