

Peer Review

Review of: "The Pause That Protects? A New Framework for Autistic Regression and Strategies for Recovery"

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Thanks and congratulations to Dr. Carlene Rogers for picking up a very exciting topic. This publication is a practical add-on to the original publication "*Mitochondrial Dynamics in Regressive Autism & the Surprising Link to Genius*" (<https://www.qeios.com/read/S5NHH0>).

As such, this commentary addresses not only doctors but hopefully also parents who are in despair when their children show regression during treatment. To better support parents, the commentary could provide specific examples of how to cope with regression: reassuring families that regression phases are often temporary, encouraging them to document behavioral changes, and guiding them to maintain close communication with therapists during these episodes. It could also acknowledge the emotional toll—fear, frustration, and uncertainty—and point parents toward peer support networks or counseling resources. By framing regression as part of a metabolic adjustment rather than a permanent decline, parents can feel more empowered to navigate these difficult moments.

The mitochondrial hypothesis plays an especially important role when considering cell-based therapies for autism. Since mitochondrial function is central to energy metabolism and synaptic resilience, any therapeutic approach that aims to restore or enhance cellular health must take this mechanism into account. Understanding regression as a metabolic phenomenon rather than a purely pathological decline provides a valuable framework for interpreting clinical outcomes in cell-based interventions.

Indeed, having performed more than 700 stem cell treatments in autistic children, we have observed that a phase of regression, tantrums, and loss of previously gained capabilities occurs in a small number of children during the first two or three months after treatment. However, such episodes of regression usually fade after one or two months. In cell-based therapies, this phase is sometimes wrongly labeled or

considered as PANS, which is actually a bacterial infection, but it has nothing to do with the regression described by Dr. Carlene Rogers.

The development after a regression phase into genius is indeed a rare event. The ‘genius’ feature has unfortunately been made a hallmark of autism in popular culture, such as in the movie *Rain Man*. Indeed, we have also seen children solving a Rubik’s Cube in seconds or recalling the weekday of any date back to the 1700s or 1800s.

It is rightly pointed out that mitochondrial dysfunction is important in autism, which we also believe to be a key factor in its pathophysiology. Beyond immediate clinical relevance, the article’s insights could influence future research and practice: longitudinal studies may be designed to track regression and recovery patterns, mitochondrial biomarkers could be investigated to predict which children are more likely to experience regression, and clinicians may adopt more flexible treatment plans that anticipate these phases. Training doctors to communicate openly with families about regression, integrating parent-reported data into treatment decisions, and developing multidisciplinary approaches will all help refine autism therapies.

This short publication is a must-read for every doctor who deals with autism and will also help parents to better cope with the frustration between improvement and regression, while inspiring researchers and clinicians to refine both their scientific inquiries and therapeutic approaches.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.