



Research Red Flags



There is a lot of research and articles about autism. But how do you know what is good research and what is bad research? This guide will help be an informed consumer of research. If you have any questions about a research article or other source, please contact the **ASERT Resource Center** (info@paautism.org or 1-877-231-4244).



Claiming a Single Cause for Autism



Autism researchers agree that there is probably not a single cause for autism. There are probably many factors for why the prevalence of autism has grown. If a researcher is claiming that one thing, like vaccines, causes autism, the research is not true.



Claiming a Cure for Autism



There are no cures for autism. If a researcher or author claim they have a cure for autism, it is not true. There are some evidence-based treatments and interventions that can improve autism symptoms like applied behavior analysis (ABA).



Sensationalized Headlines



If the results seem too good to be true, you should be cautious when reading the article.



Studies are not Peer-Reviewed



It is important that studies that are published in journals be reviewed by researchers other than the authors. This helps to make sure what is published is good quality and the results are valid or true.



The Research is Only Available in Social Media/Blog Post



If you cannot find other sources for a blog post or post on Twitter, Facebook, or Social Media, the research is probably not good. It could be a someone's personal opinion and hasn't be reviewed by other researchers.



Use Caution:

The following features are not always "red flags" but you should use caution when seeing them in research.



Promoting Non-Evidence Based Practices

If the authors are promoting practices that are not based in scientific evidence, like alternative practices and medicine, you should be careful when reading the article. The practices might not be effective or could even be unsafe.



The Company is For Profit

If a company is making money selling books, pills, or other treatments, you should be cautious when reading their research. There are many other organizations that are not making a profit that publish research that you can read. You can tell if a website is for profit ends in ".com". Most websites that end in ".org" are non-profit organizations. Websites that end in ".gov" or ".edu" are not used by for profit companies.



Findings Haven't Been Replicated

If a researcher is the only person to publish on certain findings, you should be cautious when reading their work. Ideally, findings should be the same across many studies. Or the researchers should be clear that their findings are new and should state that the research is still developing.



Recommended Sources

Here is a list of sources that ASERT recommends for looking for information about autism:

ASERT Collaborative
paautism.org

Association for Science
in Autism Treatment
asatonline.org

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention
cdc.gov

Organization for Autism Research
researchautism.org