

Title: **Changing the Course of Autism**  
 Author: **Bryan Jepson, MD**

*Changing the Course of Autism* by Bryan Jepson, M.D. with Jane Johnson is a well-written text providing a scientific overview of the complexities of the syndrome of autistic behaviors in children. The book reviews the history of autism through its evolution from a purely psychiatric disease model to the current cutting edge biomedical understandings and treatment approaches. Emerging science is cited as to the epigenetic phenomena causing this increasingly prevalent disorder. The text acts as a roadmap for healthcare professionals and parents attempting to understand the intertwined gastrointestinal, immunological, and neurological issues that are shrouded by an underlying corruption of detoxification systems in these children.

The book captures the reader's attention at the start, with the distressing story of the grandson of the founders of Autism Speaks, then continues with the author's own pathway to understanding this enigma. His son's autism led Jepson to a career change from traditional emergency physician to functional medical specialist in the treatment of autism in children. An increasingly common story, he is a physician inspired as a parent to understand the underlying biochemistry and complex multi-system involvement that spirals into the autistic condition.

The format and progression of information complexity is appropriate for the span of the intended audience. All readers should feel comfortable with the level of detail in the first chapters, with a shift in topical complexity by the fourth. Motivated non-medical parents trying to grasp the biomedical approach to improving function in their children will benefit by taking things a bit slower, with a finger in the large glossary for quick terminology review. Overall, the level of detail is great, with chapter-based reference sections covering the major topics in the confusing landscape of emerging clinical and scientific knowledge of this condition. The text is appropriate for medical students, residents and physicians lacking academic exposure to the important evidence that Dr. Jepson presents. Each chapter's reference list is extensive, a helpful compendium for anyone who wants to review the emerging literature further.

Evidence-based exploration of autism begins with scientific analysis of the growing epidemic. Jepson sets the foundation of the biological derangements, with an intermixing of relevant controversies surrounding MMR, leaky gut syndrome, thimerosal, psychoactive peptides and autoimmune phenomena. In my opinion, this would argue for the CDC to begin scientifically assessing current recommended vaccination protocols against various lighter schedules tailored toward more age-appropriate disease concerns. This approach presumably will show a societal economic benefit, if conducted appropriately. It is really the only ethical,

scientific way to show the relationship between vaccination number (stratified to age) and risk of developmental delay while maintaining coverage against the most serious pediatric infectious diseases. The CDC ought to employ this methodology for proving vaccine safety and curbing escalating costs of the vaccine program. Oncologists have used protocol comparisons for years to show differences in efficacy and safety, thus the approach is certainly valid. With current molecular techniques such protocol comparisons may also allow for new scientific understandings of vaccine impact on the T-cell response whose role in immunity seems under-studied in the clinical realm as pertains to vaccination schedules..

Before transitioning to therapeutic approaches, Dr. Jepson introduces a unifying heuristic of the complexities of the multi-system interactions involved in autistic individuals. It is a Venn diagram with a web of pathways among the various clinical issues. I recommend glancing at it often as one digests the book, to give a bit of cohesion to the seemingly disparate issues that are linked into the matrix of this syndrome's early development.

The last third of the book responsibly describes the rationale for various nutritional, pharmacologic and physiological (e.g., mild hyperbaria) approaches to treating autism. With the most promising approaches still evolving, the decision to leave out all dosing regimens allows this text to remain a general reference without becoming dated, as protocols evolve in therapy. This approach also reinforces to parents that seeking out knowledgeable physicians for treatment is critical. The complex sequence of dealing first with the gastrointestinal dysbiosis, then improving nutrition, working through detoxification, modulating the immune system, and more specifically, treating the brain, is the focus of the last third of the book.

In the final chapter, Dr. Jepson touches on the lesson of the love and life that autistic individuals experience; it is at once an inspiration to move the clinical art ahead, and a firm rebuke of the history of scientific neglect towards what has quickly become the most common pediatric chronic illness.

On a case-by-case basis at the Thoughtful House Center for Children, the course of autism is being changed. This book will engender a greater change by revolutionizing thought, in a credible format that will garner the attention of the establishment medical community, the media, governmental officials and insurers. Although these groups are not the primary audience, they are the audience that most needs to read this text. All medical students that rotate on my service get a copy of this text to impact their understanding of the greatest long-term medical crisis the current generation faces. Dr. Jepson is helping educate these younger healthcare professionals about the situation, potentially before some of them face this issue square in the face as parents themselves.

