

Study: Autism affects all brain functions

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A U.S. study has provided evidence that autism affects the functioning of the entire brain, not just communication, social behavior and reasoning.

The National Institutes of Health research found autism also affects a broad array of skills and abilities, including those involved with sensory perception, movement and memory.

The senior author of the study -- Dr. Nancy Minshew of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine -- said people with autism tend to display three characteristic behaviors, which are the basis of the diagnosis of autism. The behaviors involve difficulty interacting socially, problems with verbal and non-verbal communications, and repetitive behaviors or narrow, obsessive interests.

Traditionally, Minshew said, researchers studying autism have concentrated on those behavioral areas.

"Our paper strongly suggests that autism is not primarily a disorder of social interaction, but a global disorder affecting how the brain processes the information it receives -- especially when the information becomes complicated," Minshew said.

The study appears in the journal *Child Neuropsychology*.

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