

"Medical Home" Crucial for Autism Treatment and Family Support



Families of children with special medical needs face numerous challenges best met by high-quality “medical homes” that provide comprehensive health care and social support, write pediatricians Paul Carbone, MD, and Nancy Murphy, MD, in “[Parent-Provider-Community Partnerships: Optimizing Outcomes for Children With Disabilities](#),” a clinical report appearing in the October issue of the journal *Pediatrics*.

“The benefits of coordinated care have been confirmed by clinical research over the past decade,” comments Dan Coury, MD, medical director of Autism Speaks Autism Treatment Network (ATN). “This philosophy is at the heart of the ATN care model.”

With 17 clinics across North America, the ATN is involved in ongoing collaborations to improve communication and coordination between specialists and primary care doctors treating children and adolescents on the autism spectrum, Dr. Coury adds. At the same time each center is dedicated to providing a welcoming and supportive environment for families.

[Multiple studies](#) have confirmed that this type of medical home approach is particularly important for individuals with autism, given its many associated medical conditions—from sleep disturbances and gastrointestinal difficulties to symptoms of attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

“It’s so important for families to recognize the importance of relationships in the ongoing medical, social, and educational management of a child with autism,” says Marianne Sullivan, RN, MN, Autism Speaks assistant director of Family Services National Outreach and Resources. “Our Family Services department advocates for families needing medical providers who will work with the family over the long haul and support the child and the family as a whole,” she adds, “because a good working relationship with a medical doctor can make all the difference in managing day to day challenges as well as times of crisis.”