Editorial Note

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), a poorly understood and untreatable neurodevelopmental disorder, has drawn growing attention from academics, professionals and government. Its prevalence has increased dramatically since the 1980s. Accurate figures are not available in many countries, but the latest estimate released by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention implicates that 1 in 110 children might be affected. There is an immediate need to undertake synergistic efforts to delineate the genetic and environmental causes of this devastating ailment. This special issue on ASD is compiled with the aims to reflect the different perspectives in autism research and to provide insights for further studies. Recent studies that associate alternations in synaptic genes with ASD are summarized by Wu and colleagues who suggest further pursuits in this direction. Qiu discusses how disrupted calcium-dependent gene expression may lead to ASD, while Shlomo and Crawford present strong arguments that link ASD with neuropeptides and lipid metabolism, respectively. Tan highlights the possible role of cytokine dysregulation in ASD, whereas McAlonan on the other hand offers the notion of using immune-stimulated mouse models in the study of ASD. We hope that this collection of articles will help to stimulate further discussion in this challenging field and promote the development of effective treatment options for ASD.

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