

Opening Statement
Chairman Dan Burton
Subcommittee on Human Rights & Wellness
Government Reform Committee
***“Autism Spectrum Disorders: An Update of Federal Government
Initiatives and Revolutionary New Treatments of Neurodevelopmental
Diseases”***
May 6, 2004

The Subcommittee is convening today to examine the advances in Federal Government initiatives, as well as new treatments that have been shown to benefit the medical condition of individuals afflicted with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

As many of us already know, the incidences of autism have become increasingly prevalent in modern-day society. Once considered a rare disease, effecting roughly 1 in 10,000 children, autism now affects 1.5 Million of our Nation’s children, and this problem continues to escalate rapidly.

According to a recent “Autism Alarm” released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the American Academy of Pediatrics, currently 1 out of every 6 children are diagnosed with a developmental disorder and / or behavioral problem. Even more alarming, today 1 out of every 166 children in the United States is being diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. This major healthcare crisis is clearly reaching epidemic proportions, and will not just simply “go away.”

As such, the United States government has rightfully begun to acknowledge the present and future public health implications of this autism epidemic by establishing an Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC). The IACC is comprised of representatives from HHS, the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Education, as well as various non-governmental organizations and parental support groups.

The IACC meets on a bi-annual basis to discuss and coordinate the various research projects with regard to autism, as well as to keep an open dialogue in addressing the numerous healthcare and educational needs of individuals with autism.

To further address the concerns of the autism community, HHS and the Department of Education at long last sponsored the first-ever “National Autism Summit” in November 2003. Some of the best scientific and medical researchers, as well as autism activists, key Members of Congress, and a host of parental support groups initiated an open dialogue on the status of research initiatives.

This summit was essential to bridging the relationship between the government, non-governmental organizations, and private citizens.

To better explain the status of Federal Government autism initiatives, the Subcommittee has the pleasure of hearing testimony today from the Honorable Troy

Justesen (Justice – son), the Acting Assistant Secretary in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, at the U.S. Department of Education.

During my tenure as the Chairman of the Full Committee on Government Reform, and as the current Chair of this Subcommittee, I have convened 20 hearings on the topics of Autism, vaccine safety, and the detrimental health effects of Mercury-containing medical products.

During these investigations, numerous scientists from around the globe have testified before the Committee and have presented credible peer-reviewed research studies that indicated a direct link between the exposure of Mercury, a widely known neurotoxin, and the increasing incidences of autism.

Because autistic individuals typically have a high concentration of Mercury stored in their bodies, many doctors are concerned with how exactly they can safely remove these toxins from their patients, without exposing them to greater medical risks.

One popular method to remove this poisonous metal, called chelation therapy, involves an intravenous solution that disperses and collects Mercury, ultimately to be flushed out of the body. Unfortunately, because of the way in which this therapy is administered, it is not recommended for use in children. Dr. Rashid Buttar (Rah-sheed, Boot-tar), has developed a groundbreaking transdermal chelator that has proven safe to use in treating pediatric patients. Dr. Buttar (Boot-tar) is testifying before the

Subcommittee today to speak on his personal success and application of this groundbreaking treatment.

Another cutting edge medical development currently being tested for use in autistic patients is Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy. This treatment, which involves the delivery of pressurized oxygen to a patient, has been recently used to assist with the regeneration of neurons in brain-injured individuals. Dr. Paul Harch, President of the International Hyperbaric Medical Association, will discuss how the use of hyperbarics may be a viable therapy to administer to persons afflicted with an autism spectrum disorder.

In addition, Dr. Ken Stoller (Stole-er), has been invited to further supplement the testimony of Dr. Harch and discuss additional uses for hyperbaric treatments for patients afflicted with other neurodevelopmental diseases and injuries.

Finally, to gain the perspective of parents of brain-injured children, Ms. Julie Gordon, Founder and Director of MUMS (Mothers United for Moral Support), will be testifying today in regard to how coalitions of parents have come together and effectively lobbied for the advancement of their children's health.

As I stated before, autism is an epidemic that directly affects millions of Americans, including every single taxpayer in the United States. I am pleased to see that our Nation's health and education agencies are beginning to do their part to address this

pandemic situation, and I implore them to continue their fight against these devastating diseases.

I would like to thank all of our witnesses for making the long trip to Washington for this most important hearing, and I look forward to hearing about the revolutionary treatments and current research that will hopefully one day completely eradicate these spectrum disorders.