

Retraction of an interpretation

This statement refers to the Early Report “Ileal-lymphoid-nodular hyperplasia, non-specific colitis, and pervasive developmental disorder in children”,¹ published in *The Lancet* in 1998. It is made by 10 of the 12 original authors who could be contacted. It should be noted that this statement does not necessarily reflect the views of the other co-authors.

The main thrust of this paper¹ was the first description of an unexpected intestinal lesion in the children reported. Further evidence has been forthcoming in studies from the Royal Free Centre for Paediatric Gastroenterology and other groups to support and extend these findings.^{2,3} While much uncertainty remains about the nature of these changes, we believe it important that such work continues, as autistic children can potentially be helped by recognition and treatment of gastrointestinal problems.

We wish to make it clear that in this paper no causal link was established between MMR vaccine and autism as the data were insufficient. However, the possibility of such a link was raised and consequent events have had major implications for public health. In view of this, we consider now is the appropriate time that we should together formally retract the interpretation placed upon these findings in the paper, according to precedent.⁴

We were unable to contact John Linnell.

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- 1 Wakefield AJ, Murch SH, Anthony A, Linnell J, Casson DM, Malik M, Berelowitz M, Dhillon AP, Thomson MA, Harvey P, Valentine A, Davies SE, Walker-Smith JA. Ileal-lymphoid-nodular hyperplasia, non-specific colitis, and pervasive developmental disorder in children. *Lancet* 1998; **351**: 637–41.
- 2 Murch S. MMR and autism: the debate continues. *Lancet* 2004; **363**: 568–69.
- 3 Horvath K, Perman JA. Autistic disorder and gastrointestinal disease. *Curr Opin Pediatr* 2002; **14**: 583–87.
- 4 Zhang L, Lopez P, He T, Yu W, Ho DD. Retraction of an interpretation. *Science* 2004; **303**: 467.