Letter to the Editor

Serum in the past or at present

To the Editor,

We read with interest the recently published article entitled “Maternal antineuronal antibodies and risk of childhood autism spectrum disorders: A case-control study.”1 Dr Ali and colleagues1 conducted a case-control study to evaluate the serum levels of antineuronal antibodies in women who had children with diagnosed and confirmed autism.1 The authors aimed to explore the role of maternal immune response on the development of childhood autism. The authors found that the presence of certain types of anineuronal antibodies (anti-Yo antibodies and antiamphiphysin antibodies) might contribute significantly to the risk of development of autism in their children.1 This article was quite interesting; however, we questioned the conclusion the authors reached, and we were not convinced by the title “Maternal antineuronal antibodies and risk of childhood autism spectrum disorders.”

In fact, it would appear that the methods used by the authors were questionable as well. To begin, the authors should explain the following issues: What was the mean or median age of these children with autism? Are they 4 or 5 years of age? Did the authors enroll women who had already delivered a baby who was later diagnosed with autism in the following period? If the answer was yes, this would suggest that these sera were obtained “now.” Moreover, this would indicate that these autistic children were diagnosed at or about 4 and 5 years after delivery. The sera in Ali et al’s study were not obtained at the time when these women were pregnant. Therefore, the data from their study cannot be totally representative of the real situation of the pregnancies of these women. It was very inappropriate for these authors to draw their conclusion that these antineuronal antibodies contributed significantly to the risk of children’s autism. Additionally, a similar critique is raised about the title of this article. Modification of both the article title and the conclusion should be formed. Finally, our suggestion is that women with some antineuronal antibodies might have a higher risk of autistic children, although the time interval was uncertain. This finding would benefit from further investigation and confirmation.

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References


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Conflicts of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest related to the subject matter or materials discussed in this article.
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