Tylenol and Autism: More to the Story

By Joan Swirsky

October 14, 2025

In 2020, the Atlanta-based U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said that one in 36 children (approximately four percent of boys and one percent of girls) was estimated to have autism-spectrum disorder, estimates that were significantly higher than those in all previous years.

But just five years later, according to the press conference held just weeks ago on September 22, President Trump – in the presence of U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) administrator Dr. Mehmet Oz – announced that the Department of Health and Human Services stated that autism had surged in America nearly 400% and now affects 1 in 31 American children…

…and that this alarming statistic was a result of pregnant women taking Tylenol during their pregnancies!

Within milliseconds, everyone weighed in, from a skeptical Scientific American to the hearty support of the Icahn School in the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine.

Here, Dr. Josh Redd explains in plain English why Tylenol is so bad for pregnant women.

Besides the pros and cons, disturbing facts emerged, not the least of which is that the FDA knew about the Tylenol-autism

link over a decade and a half ago…but did nothing! Talk about "follow the money"!

In fact, as early as 2019, a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) study recommended – again, with no follow-through – that the labels be revised to advise pregnant women to "be careful about casual use of acetaminophen when it is not strongly needed for pain or other purposes."

It took a few years, but since September 2022, according to the BirthInjuryCenter.org, over 100 lawsuits have been filed nationwide against acetaminophen manufacturers, claiming damage over the failure to warn pregnant users that Tylenol and generic versions may increase the risk of having a baby with autism and/or ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder).

By that I mean that this potentially life-altering announcement omitted – actually failed – to include a quite obvious cause of autism's precipitous rise over the past several decades.

To explain: In the early '70s, I worked nights – the 11 P.M. to 7 A.M. shift – as a delivery room nurse at a university-affiliated hospital near my home on Long Island. It was a revolutionary time in obstetrics, when the Lamaze method of "prepared childbirth" and the use of sonograms to visualize fetuses were gaining popularity.

Actually, ultrasound technology was first developed in Scotland in the mid-1950s by obstetrician Ian Donald and engineer Tom Brown to detect industrial flaws in ships. By the end of the '50s, ultrasound was routinely used in Glasgow hospitals, but it was not until the 1970s that it was used in American hospitals to check that the developing baby, placenta, and amniotic fluid were normal and to detect abnormal conditions such as birth defects and ectopic pregnancies.

At the end of the ’70s, I became a certified Lamaze teacher and spent the next 22 years giving weekly classes to couples in my home. In a very real way, I had my own laboratory, as I learned directly from my clients about the increasing escalation of sonogram exams they had as the decades elapsed.

In the early 1980s, it was common for only one or two out of the ten women in my classes to have a sonogram. In just a few years, every woman in my classes had had a sonogram. And in the late ’80s and ’90s, almost every woman had not one sonogram, but often two or three or four or five – starting as early as three or four weeks’ gestation and extending, in some instances, right up to delivery!

It was in the ’90s, in fact, that it occurred to me that the scary rise in the incidence of autism might be linked to the significant rise in ultrasound exams. Over the years, I’ve posited my theory to a number of people, written letters to the editors of newspapers – including to the N.Y. Times, for which I wrote for over 20 years, but they still refused to publish my letter – and emailed my idea to one of the top news people at the Fox News Network, but the “we report/you decide” powers that be on that TV station strangely decided not to report on this subject.

I contacted autism researchers Dr. Marcel Just and Dr. Diane L. Williams, who told me via email that Dr. Pasko Rakic at Yale was, indeed, exploring the autism-ultrasound link.

Then, in 2006, I found an article in Midwifery Today, “Questions about Prenatal Ultrasound and the Alarming Increase in Autism,” by writer-researcher Caroline Rodgers.

“The steep increase in autism,” Rodgers wrote, “goes beyond the U.S.: It is a “global phenomenon” that “has emerged … across vastly different environments and cultures.”

However, Rodgers added, “what all industrial countries do have in common is … the use of routine prenatal ultrasound on

pregnant women. In countries with nationalized health care, where virtually all pregnant women are exposed to ultrasound, the autism rates are even higher than in the U.S., where due to disparities in income and health insurance, some 30 percent of pregnant women do not yet undergo ultrasound scanning."

Aha! Could this be why blacks and Hispanics in America continue to lag behind whites in the development of autism?

Dolphins, Whales…Relevance?

In the summer of 2012, as many as 3,000 dead dolphins were found in Peru. Researchers at the Organization for the Conservation of Aquatic Animals (ORCA), a Peruvian marine animal conservation organization, attributed the mass deaths to the use of deep-water sonar by ships in nearby waters.

Even earlier, in June of 2008, four days after a Navy helicopter was using controversial sonar equipment during training exercises off the Cornish coast in Great Britain, 26 dolphins died in a mass stranding.

These events – and literally thousands that are similar – are relevant because many mass deaths and strandings of whales and dolphins have been attributed to the sonar waves emitted from Navy ships.

In 2009, an article in Scientific American by John Slocum explained that sonar (sound navigation and ranging) systems, which were first developed by the U.S. Navy to detect enemy submarines, "generate slow-rolling sound waves topping out at around 235 decibels; the world's loudest rock bands top out at only 130. These sound waves can travel for hundreds of miles under water and can retain an intensity of 140 decibels as far as 300 miles from their source."

Slocum wrote that a successful 2003 lawsuit against the Navy brought by the nonprofit Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) to restrict the use of low-frequency sonar in waters

rich in marine wildlife was upheld by two lower courts, but the Supreme Court "ruled that the Navy should be allowed to continue the use of some mid-frequency sonar testing for the sake of national security."

Two quick questions: If sonar can kill fully developed dolphins, what effect, then, does it have on the developing brains of in utero embryos and fetuses? And why was the massive use of sonograms during pregnancy not even considered an area of research in our government's investigation?

And Then There's the Heat!

Just as concerning, as far back 1982, the World Health Organization (WHO)'s study, "Effects of Ultrasound on Biological Systems," concluded that "neurological, behavioral, developmental, immunological, hematological changes and reduced fetal weight can result from exposure to ultrasound." Two years later, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) reported that when birth defects occurred, the acoustic output of sonograms was usually high enough to cause considerable heat.

And yet, in 1993, the FDA approved an eightfold increase in the potential acoustical output of ultrasound equipment! Ostensibly, this increase was to enhance visualization of the heart and small vessels during microsurgery. Clearly, the health and well-being of developing fetuses was not a consideration!

Getting back to those embryos and fetuses, Rodgers explained that "when the transducer from the ultrasound is positioned over the part of the fetus the operator is trying to visualize, the fetus may be feeling vibrations, heat, or both."

Rodgers then cited a warning the Food and Drug Administration issued way back in 2004: "Even at low levels, [ultrasound] laboratory studies have shown it can have … jarring

vibrations" – one study compared the noise to a subway coming into a station – "and a rise in temperature."

The cause of autism, Rodgers wrote, "has been pinned on everything from 'emotionally remote' mothers … to vaccines, genetics, immunological disorders, environmental toxins and maternal infections. A far simpler possibility … is the pervasive use of prenatal ultrasound, which can cause potentially dangerous thermal effects."

Imagine how these assaults affect the developing brain of a fetus!

Enter Hard Science

In August 2006, Pasko Rakic, M.D., chair of Yale School of Medicine's Department of Neurobiology, announced the results of a study in which pregnant mice underwent various durations of ultrasound. The brains of the offspring showed damage that was also found in the brains of people with autism.

The research, funded by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, also implicated ultrasound in neurodevelopmental problems in children, such as dyslexia, epilepsy, mental retardation, and schizophrenia, and showed that damage to brain cells increased with longer exposures.

Dr. Rakic's study, Rodgers said, "is just one of many animal experiments and human studies conducted over the years indicating that prenatal ultrasound can be harmful to babies."

Follow the Money

In The Daily Beast, Jennifer Margulis, author of *Business of Baby: What Doctors Don't Tell You, What Corporations Try to Sell You, and How to Put Your Baby before Their Bottom Line*, wrote that Dr. Rakic "concluded that all nonmedical use of ultrasound on pregnant women should be avoided."

In her research, Margulis said that she discovered that "there

is mounting evidence that overexposure to sound waves – or perhaps exposure to sound waves at a critical time during fetal development – is to blame for the astronomic rise in neurological disorders among America's children."

Clearly, there is a vast human tragedy – a true man-made disaster – taking place before our eyes.

For whatever reasons – follow the money? – the mountain of evidence that points to a causal relationship between prenatal ultrasound exams and an escalating pandemic of autism is being systematically ignored.

Could it have anything to do with the huge investments doctors and scientists have made in ultrasound technology, which, according to Jennifer Margulis, "adds more than $1 billion to the cost of caring for pregnant women in America each year"?

Could it have anything to do with the revenue now pouring like an avalanche into the coffers of diagnostic and treatment centers and classrooms?

Could it have anything to do with modern journalism's almost complete abandonment of hard-nosed reporting and life-saving exposés?

As Caroline Rodgers said, there is an elephant in the room when it comes to the subject of autism, and that elephant is the worldwide blitzkrieg of ultrasound exams on pregnant women, exams that have bombarded the babies they're carrying with the brain-warping sound waves and heat that will continue to affect them every second of their autistic lives.

Yoo-hoo, President Trump, RFK Jr., and Dr. Oz! It's way past time to give pregnancy sonograms the same attention and warnings you gave so confidently to Tylenol!

E-Mail Joan Swirsky: joanswirsky@gmail.com

Website: http://www.joanswirsky.com