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Autism Treatment Network Receives \$12 Million Grant from Health Resources and Services Administration
Grant will fund Clinical Research and the Development of Evidence-Based Medical Guidelines for Children with Autism

NEW YORK, NY (September 11, 2008) -- Autism Speaks, the nation's largest autism advocacy organization, today announced that its Autism Treatment Network (ATN) has received a three-year, \$12 million grant to serve as an Autism Intervention Research Network on Physical Health (AIR-P). The network grant was part of four initiatives developed by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Maternal and Child Health Bureau under the Combating Autism Act Initiative. As an AIR-P Network, the ATN will develop and conduct research projects on interventions that have a direct impact on improving the physical health and well-being of children and adolescents with autism. The grant will also expand the ATN's on-going efforts to develop clinical guidelines supported by rigorous research evidence.

"The HRSA grant is an important byproduct of the Combating Autism Act which advocacy groups fought hard to pass in 2006," said Peter Bell, Executive Vice President of Programs and Services for Autism Speaks and father of a teenage son affected by autism. "The autism community asked for the medical community to take their children's health more seriously, to create practice guidelines that would address important concerns like GI and sleep problems, and other underlying issues. This grant recognizes ATN as a group that can deliver on these critical matters."

The multi-institutional grant will be led by the ATN Clinical Coordinating Center at MassGeneral Hospital *for* Children. This expansive collaboration brings together the fifteen participating ATN Centers, the National Initiative for Child Healthcare Quality (NICHQ), and the EMMES Corporation which serves as the Data Coordinating Center for the ATN. "This funding will help us address real issues in real time," said Clara Lajonchere, PhD, Vice President of Clinical Programs for Autism Speaks. "Our goal is to develop research studies that will have a great impact on both families and the medical community."

James Perrin, MD, lead Principal Investigator and Director of the Clinical Coordinating Center said, "The HRSA grant greatly expands the ability of the ATN to ask and answer key questions about diagnosis and treatment - the questions that parents very much want answers to. With this new support, the ATN can move more quickly and more effectively in building a strong research agenda to gain the evidence on which to base treatment."

The HRSA funding will support two research projects that address issues of great concern to parents: sleep and nutrition. The sleep study, led by Beth Malow, MD

of Vanderbilt University, will develop and evaluate a parent-based sleep education program aimed at improving sleep and behavioral outcomes. The nutrition study, led by Susan Hyman, MD of the University of Rochester, will evaluate nutritional intake and diet patterns in children with autism spectrum disorders and their relationship to GI and sleep conditions. Another aim is to develop evaluation tools and nutritional guidelines for physicians. In addition to conducting these studies, the ATN will also constitute an AIR-P Steering Committee to develop a research agenda promoting the development of studies aimed at improving medical intervention and treatment.

"With this award, the ATN will be able to conduct high quality clinical studies on the treatment of medical conditions associated with autism," said Geri Dawson, PhD, Chief Science Officer for Autism Speaks. "The results of these studies, which will focus on nutrition and associated GI conditions, and sleep difficulties, will inform clinical practice and have an impact on the quality of children's lives today."