



Office of Communications  
41 Pacella Park Drive  
Randolph, Mass 02368

# STATEMENT

February 4, 2010

**Contacts:** Susan G. Lauermann, APR, 781-437-1257  
Julia Burgess, 781-437-1348

## **National Autism Expert Available for Comment on *The Lancet's* Retraction of Dr. Andrew Wakefield's Study Linking MMR Vaccine to Autism**

With *The Lancet's* retraction of Wakefield's study this week, many parents are left wondering, "What answers does science really offer us?"

The scientific community and the general public should proceed with caution when interpreting the results of any single study. Not all studies are created equal; some do not apply the rigorous standards necessary to arrive at scientifically sound conclusions. In order for science to be useful to families, it requires two essential components. It must be able to be replicated in other studies, and it must use a rigorous, high quality methodology.

The National Autism Center is dedicated to identifying effective, research-based treatments for children and adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In our extensive review of the ASD research, our primary goal is to separate treatments that reach this criteria from those that don't. Although the process results in fewer recommended treatments, it allows us to offer a message of hope to families – science and these guidelines can help people proceed with greater confidence as they make important decisions about a child's treatment.

Wakefield's study never met these criteria. Researchers have not been able to replicate his study, and the methods he used were insufficient. In the meantime, numerous rigorous, independent studies conducted by researchers all over the world have found no link between vaccines and autism. We are hopeful that this retraction will help the autism community focus with renewed intensity on diagnosing and effectively treating individuals with ASD.

*Susan M. Wilczynski Ph.D., BCBA, Executive Director of the National Autism Center, is available for further comment.*

### **About Susan M. Wilczynski, Ph.D., BCBA**

Susan M. Wilczynski, Ph.D., BCBA, is Executive Director of the National Autism Center. In her role as Chair of the National Standards Project, she worked in collaboration with experts from around the country to establish national standards for the treatment of individuals on the autism spectrum. These findings are outlined in the National Standards Report, published by the National Autism Center in September of 2009.

Before joining the National Autism Center as Executive Director, Dr. Wilczynski developed and directed an intensive early intervention program for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) at Munroe-Meyer Institute for Genetics and Rehabilitation. She has authored multiple articles and book chapters on the treatment of ASD and has co-edited the book “Effective Practices for Children with Autism.”

A licensed psychologist and a board certified behavior analyst, Dr. Wilczynski has held academic appointments at the University of Southern Mississippi, the University of Nebraska Medical Center, and UMASS-Boston.

She is a frequent keynote speaker on the national conference circuit for issues related to early identification of and intervention for children with ASD, treatment selection, and parent education, as well as building and sustaining system-wide capacity to deliver effective, evidence-based treatment for individuals with ASD.

### **About the National Autism Center**

The National Autism Center is dedicated to serving children and adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) by providing reliable information, promoting best practices, and offering comprehensive resources for families, practitioners, and communities.

The National Autism Center recently completed an unprecedented multi-year project — the National Standards Project — to establish a set of standards for effective, research-validated educational and behavioral interventions for children on the spectrum. These standards identify treatments that effectively target the core symptoms of ASD. The resulting National Standards Report is the most comprehensive analysis available to date about treatments for children and adolescents with ASD. It is a single, authoritative source of guidance for parents, caregivers, educators, and service providers as they make informed treatment decisions.

An advocate for evidence-based treatment approaches, the National Autism Center identifies effective programming and shares practical information with families about how to respond to the challenges they face. The Center also conducts applied research and develops training and service models for practitioners. Finally, the Center works to shape public policy concerning ASD and its treatment through the development and dissemination of national standards of practice.

For more information, visit [nationalautismcenter.org](http://nationalautismcenter.org).