

Reversing Chronic Diseases in Children

Analysis by [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#)

November 19, 2023

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Epidemic Answers, founded by Beth Lambert in 2009, is a research organization focused on helping children with autism and other chronic diseases
- › In her 2010 book, "A Compromised Generation: The Epidemic of Chronic Illness in America's Children," Lambert reviewed not only the epidemic of autism but also other childhood epidemics, such as autoimmune diseases, and their environmental root cause
- › Epidemic Answers' research project, "Documenting Hope," is analyzing the environmental causes behind chronic conditions and what we can do to reverse them
- › Autism and most other chronic childhood diseases are caused by a constellation of factors that contribute to the total toxic load of modern living

In the featured video, I interview Beth Lambert, who in 2009 founded Epidemic Answers, a research organization focused on helping children with autism and other chronic diseases.

When I graduated medical school, the incidence of autism was 1 in 10,000. For the first decade of my medical practice, I didn't have a single autistic patient. By the mid- to late-1990s, I was treating hundreds of autistic children in my practice, and since then, autism has reached truly epidemic proportions.

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childhood epidemics, such as autoimmune diseases, and their environmental root causes.

"I cataloged these kids who were getting better and told their stories," she says. "Since that time, I have been documenting stories of kids who have reversed all kinds of conditions, and I have launched a nonprofit organization to help connect parents with the resources they need to help their kids get on the road to recovery.

Subsequently, I also started several research studies to look at the environmental causes of autism, ADHD and autoimmune diseases, and what can be done to help reverse these [problems].

So, it's really become a life mission for me to help people understand that their kids don't need to be sick, and there's plenty of tools and resources we have today to solve this epidemic. It's just information and access to resources. That's really it. Because that's the answer, I'm just hell-bent on getting that message out there."

Studies Underway

Chris D'Adamo, who [co-wrote my paper on linoleic acid \(LA\)](#), published in the journal *Nutrients*, is the research director for the Epidemic Answer's research project called "Documenting Hope," which is looking at the environmental causes of chronic conditions and what we can do to reverse them.

"Our first study is gathering tons of information about what it means to be a child in modern America," Lambert explains. "What they are eating, what they are putting on their skin, what they are doing all day long – screen habits, sleep – anything you can imagine that is as part of their health. We correlate all of these things with health outcomes, symptoms and diagnoses, et cetera."

They're also working on an intervention study in which they're doing a deep dive into the health of a small group of children with chronic health conditions to identify the root

causes. Each child is then placed on a customized 18-month program to reverse their condition and their progress is documented along the way.

"So, we're not only trying to understand what is causing these conditions, but what we can do to reverse them," Lambert says.

"We know we need to gather the evidence, because for over 10 years, I've been talking to physicians who will say, 'Well, there's no evidence that autism is reversible. That's only anecdotal.' Well, if it's only anecdotal, why aren't we doing research to demonstrate that it is possible? Why don't we pull together some evidence of hope for these children who are impacted?"

Lay of the Land

As explained by Lambert, in the 1980s, a movement of parents who suspected their child's autism was not necessarily genetic and irreversible started gaining traction. Physicians also began asking questions, wondering whether it's a systemic problem as opposed to just a brain-based one, and started opening to the possibility that it might be reversible.

"They started looking into the GI tract, they started looking into toxicity and nutrition – all these kinds of things ... Defeat Autism Now was one of the first physician and parent movements where they got together and had conferences. AutismOne was another.

I would say the biggest legacy of that movement right now is probably TACA, which used to be called Talk About Curing Autism ... They are looking at the root causes of autism and provide resources for parents that ... are looking for nutrition changes, how to detoxify a child, and how to approach it from a biomedical perspective."

Unfortunately, many autism organizations have struggled to gain traction because the only autism treatments that are reimbursed by insurance are applied behavioral analysis (ABA), physical therapy (PT) and occupational therapy (OT).

Putting the Cart Before the Horse

The widely accepted form of treating autism, ABA, basically trains the child into expected or typical behaviors. Oftentimes, however, ABA is putting the proverbial cart before the horse. As explained by Lambert:

"They have brains and bodies that aren't talking to each other, the communication's out of whack. That needs to be addressed first. That's why I talk about root causes, because if you can address the root causes and what's going on that precipitates the behaviors we associate with autism, then you're going to have all kinds of success using modalities like ABA or OT or PT.

They can all be helpful in modalities, but not until you look at some of the things that precipitated the symptoms in the first place ...

No one's asking about the child's diet. No one is asking about how they're sleeping, or how they're pooping, or are they going outside? Are they sitting in front of a screen? Nobody's asking those questions. But those are all really important for kids, especially kids on the spectrum.

When you're talking about a child who is not going to be able to live independently unless we intervene, who may not be able to do things for themselves unless we intervene, you have to start asking questions about the health of their whole body, because the brain is connected to the body, and if you have something out of balance in the body, it's going to impact your brain and it's going to precipitate symptoms of autism.

So, going back to the origins of this whole movement, there were a lot of parents and practitioners who started asking the right questions, asking about nutrition, asking about their environment.

And when they followed the path to bring their child's body back into balance by eating nutritious foods, getting them outside, making sure they're sleeping,

making sure their environment is detoxified, the symptoms of autism started evaporating.

That to me is so profoundly inspiring. If we know that by changing the environment you can improve this child's life and perhaps drop that diagnosis, help them to thrive, why wouldn't we be pursuing these options? That's where TACA came in to try and to close that gap.

Epidemic Answers has started to not just do that for kids with autism, but for kids with all kinds of chronic conditions, whether it's Type 1 diabetes or rheumatoid arthritis or autism. You just look at the root causes and your child can have a better outcome if you make those changes that you need to their environment and their lifestyle."

The Real Cause of Autism: The Toxic Load of Modern Living

Root causes contributing to the epidemic of chronic diseases in children include (but are not limited to) things like processed food loaded with sugar and harmful fats like linoleic acid, gut dysfunction, childhood vaccines, antibiotic overuse and mold.

But it's almost never just one of those things, but rather a constellation of contributing factors. Genetics also plays a role. For example, your genes dictate how well your body can detoxify. But contrary to popular belief, genetics are rarely the sole or even primary cause, because genes are epigenetically regulated, meaning they're influenced and modified by the environment.

"At the end of the day, when you start looking in the literature, and you start compiling all of these stories, you begin to see a picture of what is causing autism," Lambert says. "It's what we call the total load of modern living. The total load is a concept that's been around for a very long time, especially in environmental medicine ...

Patricia Lemer, who wrote a book called 'Outsmarting Autism,' first applied the concept of total load to neurodevelopmental conditions like autism, where she

would say, basically, 'It isn't one thing that causes autism. It's really a perfect storm, a total load. It's too many stressors of modern living on a body that doesn't have enough resources to withstand those stressors.'

Here's an example. Why is it that two children go into a pediatrician's office, one gets their 18-month vaccines and the other one gets their 18-month vaccines, one develops autism and the other one doesn't? Is it genes? Is it what the child ate that day? Is it the fact that one child had a sickness and the other one didn't?

Was it because this child was on antibiotics when he had vaccines and this one wasn't? There are so many variables in each child and in each story. So, that's where I think the total load concept or total load theory really stands up is because there's so much medical literature on modern living and the ways that we live in the modern world and how it damages your health.

Inflammatory foods, processed foods, the enormous quantity of sugar that modern children consume, the number of pharmaceuticals children have, the antibiotics, for instance ... Antibiotics ... destroy your gut bacteria. What is the significance of that? That gut bacteria regulates everything from your immune system to your digestion of food and your metabolism.

So, all of those factors are going to impact a child, especially when they are in that critical developmental time. So, if you think about an infant and all the work they have to do to get to crawl, and walk, and talk, and relate to the humans in their lives, all of that takes an enormous amount of energy.

If their body is burdened with toxins from the laundry detergent, and from the mercury and cadmium on their toys, and from the inflammatory foods they're eating, and their vaccines and their antibiotics and their proton pump inhibitors ... that's when you're going to see them begin to develop symptoms, whether those are skin symptoms, like eczema, allergies, or whether it's neurodevelopmental symptoms.

As we're going through this developmental timeline, if you have an enormous burden of stressors, inflammation going on in your body, and you're supposed to be developing vision or speech, your body's too busy dealing with all those stressors, so you're going to have an arrested, impaired, or delayed development.

The short answer is, it's not one thing. Autism is not caused by one thing. It's caused by modern living. And all the things that we do that we think are normal, the food we eat, the medicines we take, the activities we do – sitting inside and playing on devices rather than doing the things that humans evolved to do over millions of years.

We are so disconnected from nature. We don't eat natural food, we don't do natural activities. We don't even see the sunlight anymore. So, that, in a nutshell, is really what's causing, not just autism, but the epidemic of asthma, obesity, diabetes, autoimmune diseases. It's all part of the same thing."

Multipronged Treatment Approach Is Required

Epidemic Answers is the only group currently conducting research to identify root causes and how to reverse chronic childhood diseases, and preliminary data confirm that the more stressors a child has, the worse their health outcomes.

They're also one of the few groups looking at the impact of multiple interventions at once. Most studies focus on one thing at a time, but that's not how the real world works.

"These kids who have recovered from autism, they never did one thing at a time," Lambert says. "The parents did everything all at once to support that child and get their body what it needed to course correct ... You can't just do one thing.

You have to address diet at the same time you're addressing sleep, at the same time you're addressing stooling, at the same time you're addressing integrating

the brain and the body with therapies that help correct those developmental problems that emerge.

By doing all of those things at once, we hypothesize that these kids can get better, that they can drop their diagnoses. That's why we're doing the research like this, because people don't believe it. Anecdotes don't carry weight.

We need to do the research in order to convince the medical community that this really is the way to go. Kids are developing these conditions because of the way we're living, so we have to change the way they're living in order to get them better."

Basic Nutritional Considerations

I strongly suspect linoleic acid in processed food is a major contributor to ill health, so making sure you're feeding your child whole food, ideally organic, is key. Sugar is frequently thought to be the primary culprit, but I believe linoleic acid is far more dangerous in the long term than sugar.

Now, that doesn't mean carbohydrates are unfairly criticized. My first book, published in 2004, was "The No-Grain Diet." Many autistic children put on a no-grain diet fared quite well. But while grains contain sugar, many also have high linoleic acid content.

Resistant starches can also cause problems, as the fiber, which your body cannot digest, ends up fueling gram-negative bacteria that produce endotoxin in your colon. Endotoxin causes loads of inflammation and increases your serotonin level.

Serotonin is probably another major contributing factor for these kids. Lowering their serotonin levels and increasing GABA, an inhibitory neurotransmitter, would probably be quite helpful.

Other key strategies include spending more time outdoors in natural environments and minimizing your electromagnetic field (EMF) exposure. These things don't cost anything,

and they not only can reduce your child's risk for autism but also most chronic degenerative diseases.

Adventures in Healing Conference

If you want to learn more about how to address autism and/or chronic childhood diseases, you don't want to miss the [Adventures in Healing conference](#), which will be held November 10 through 12, 2023, in Orlando. The conference has two tracks, one for professionals and one for parents, and I'll be speaking at both.

"It is meant to simulate some of what we're learning in our intervention study. Our intervention study through Documenting Hope is called the FLIGHT Study. Part of what we're doing in there is bringing in experts from a variety of perspectives. We have a nutrition expert. Somebody who understands the environment, and what kinds of environmental toxins can impact a child.

We have somebody who does functional medicine. We have people who bring in structural health, like the dental piece, the oral motor piece and vision. All of these pieces are being looked at in each individual child in our intervention study.

In this conference, we wanted to represent that with speakers. So, we're having speakers who can speak about environmental elements, [such as] Amy Ziff, who knows a lot about the environmental toxins in your personal care products, and how to get those out of your home.

We have a dietician and a nutritionist coming in to talk about specialized diets for kids with chronic conditions, autism and autoimmune diseases and more. We have functional medicine doctors coming in to talk about things like mold in the environment. We have doctors who are coming in to talk about rewiring the brain to the body."

Consider Donating to Epidemic Answers

Please, consider making a donation to Epidemic Answers today, and I will match your donation dollar for dollar up to \$10,000. I believe the work Lambert is doing is incredibly crucial for our future. If we can crack the nut of autism, we will also be able to help people with other conditions, such as Alzheimer's disease, which is affecting people at increasingly younger ages.

Make a Donation Now

To learn more, please visit EpidemicAnswers.org and/or DocumentingHope.com. Epidemic Answers also has a **membership community called Healing Together**, where you can learn how to tackle your child's most challenging health symptoms. As explained by Lambert:

"It's a path forward and a way to not just reverse autism, but all of these modern living conditions, including the ones at the other end of the spectrum like Alzheimer's.

Healing Together is a support group. We show a step-by-step process how to do the diet changes, how to change your environment, what kinds of therapeutics to seek for your child's particular symptoms.

We provide life support. We do research, but we also provide support and education and outreach to families who are impacted and are looking for the tools and resources to reverse their child's condition."