

# Engaging Your Autistic Population

**Market Expansion Through Cultural Understanding**



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Christina Nguyen PharmD Candidate 2025  
Angelina Tucker, PharmD, BCGP, CDCES  
Community Connected  
CPESN USA

# Objectives

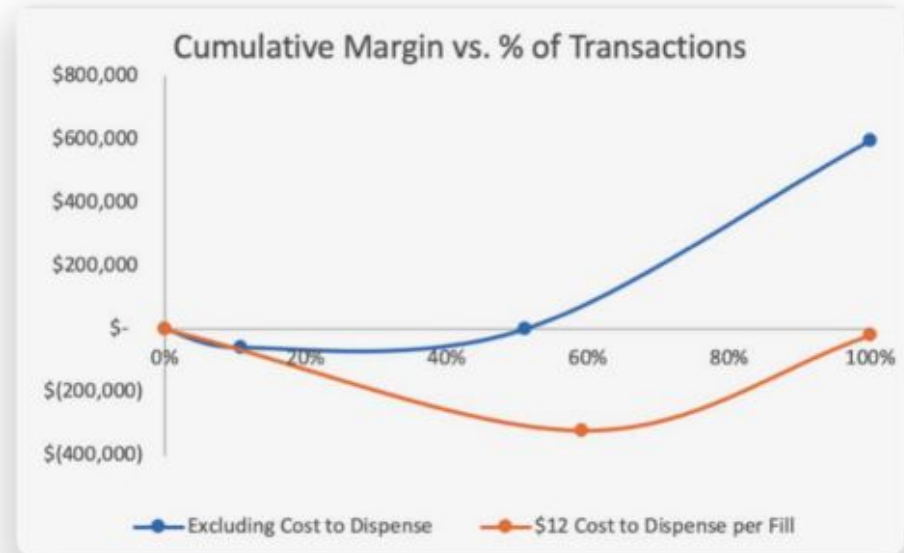
1. Define Autism Spectrum Disorder and describe the national statistics of this population
2. Review the strategies for pharmacies to better engage with Autistic employees and patients
3. Identify the stakeholders in the community committed to the Autistic population and explain how a pharmacy owner can expand his services

# Setting The Stage

A community pharmacy owner has an Autistic population within one mile of his pharmacy. However, he notices that he has not had many shopping at his store.

What can he do to become a trusted member in his community and expand his market into an untapped population?

# Demographic Profile IN and AROUND your pharmacy



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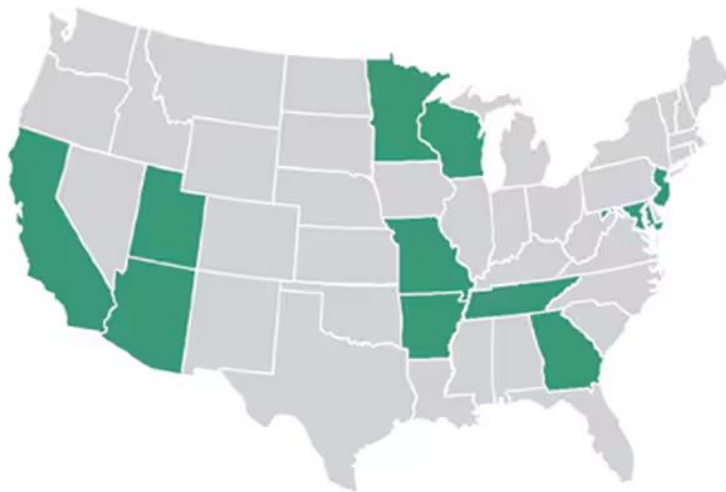
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# What is Autism?

**Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**, is a complex, lifelong developmental condition that typically appears during early childhood and can impact a person's social skills, communication, relationships, and self-regulation. The Autism experience is different for everyone. It is defined by a certain set of behaviors and is often referred to as a “spectrum condition” that affects people differently and to varying degrees.

# Statistics in 2020

STATES WITH ADDM SITES  
Surveillance Year 2020



SURVEILLANCE AMONG

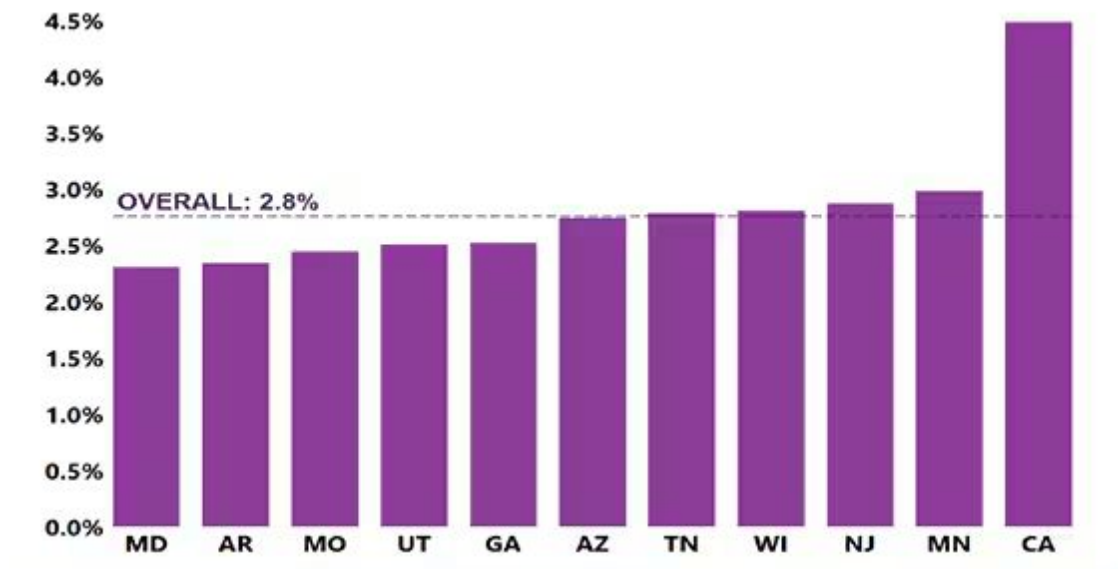
4-year-olds & 8-year-olds

- Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network used a systematic record review.
- Information was collected on 4-year-old and 8-year-old children residing in the colored states in 2020.

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/addm-community-report/deeper-dive.html>

# Statistics in 2020

- **1 in 36** in the 11 states
  - 8-year-old children diagnosed with ADD in 2020
- Estimated 1/3 of children with ASD had intellectual disability
- 8-year-old children who were identified with ASD ranged from 2.3% or 1 in 43 children in Maryland to 4.5% or 1 in 22 children in California.



<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/addm-community-report/key-findings.html>

# Statistics in 2020

- Minority children were more likely to be diagnosed with ASD than White children



- A/PI: Asian and Pacific Islander



# Autistic American Health

According to 2021

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-statistics-asd>

**Average age of intervention  
and diagnosis in the U.S.**

**4.7** average age of  
intervention

**5.0** average age of  
diagnosis

**5.6** average age of  
diagnosis **for girls**

**73.6%**

of autistic high school  
students receiving special  
education graduate with  
a diploma.

**19.3%**

finish high school with  
certificates.

**8.1%**

drop out of high school.

# Engagement

**Employees**, Patients, Community Stakeholders

Creating a business proposition around a niche market



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# Employment Statistics

30%

Currently, only 30% on average disclose that they are Autistic to their employer.

85%

Up to 85% of Autistic with a college degree are unemployed or underemployed.

40%

Autistic adults typically earn 40% less than their peers with other disabilities.

19.3%

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, only about 19.3% of persons with a disability were employed in 2020.

1 in 36

About 1 in 36 children in the U.S. is diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. As these children grow and enter the job market, companies that embrace neurodiversity are likely to have a competitive advantage.

Increased

Businesses employing Autistic individuals report increased innovation and problem-solving capabilities, owing to the diversity of thought in their teams.

<https://autismsociety.org/resources/employment/>

# Employment Tools

State representation in the United States that supports job readiness and employment for people with Autism and other disabilities

1. [Autism Society Affiliate](#)

A nationwide network of affiliates, connecting people to the resources they need through education, advocacy, support, information and referral, and community programming. Click on the link to find specific resources for each state.

2. [Department of Vocational Rehabilitation](#)

Information based on states and territories for VR (Vocational Rehabilitation) agency that supports individuals with all types of disabilities. click on the links to find your state information.

<https://autismsociety.org/resources/employment/>

# Integrated Employment Opportunities

## Integrated employment opportunities

The Autism Society's Employment initiative creates connections – between Autistic individuals, caregivers, and employers – to advance access to resources, training, and opportunities for meaningful work experiences.

## Employment Training and Resource Center

### [Becoming an Autism-Informed Organization Online Courses](#)

A Fulfillment Mindset values diverse paths for Autistic individuals to find fulfillment in employment by focusing on whole-person integration in employment and community surroundings, personal growth, increases self-esteem, and enables community inclusion for Autistic individuals

<https://autismsociety.org/resources/employment/>

# 4 Pillars of Belonging in Your Pharmacy

Goal: Amplifying Outreach, Driving Innovation, Empowering Change and breaking systemic barriers

1. **Acceptance**
  - a. Strives to dismantle barriers and misconceptions about Autism by equipping workplaces to support Autistic employees
2. **Access**
  - a. Seeks to remove barriers, ensuring Autistic individuals access essential services, fair workplace treatment, VR and Medicaid support, and SSI benefits while staying employed
3. **Dignity**
  - a. Promotes meaningful careers aligned with their unique strengths
  - b. It seeks to challenge biases about non-professional jobs, highlighting the value of all employment
4. **Excitement**
  - a. Inspire employers and Autistic individuals alike, fostering enthusiasm for meaningful employment across diverse sectors.

<https://autismsociety.org/resources/employment/>

# Engaging Your Employees

## World Autism Awareness Month



- Observed annually on April 2<sup>nd</sup> combating misconceptions around autism and to provide support and resources for autistic people and their families in need.

**Key takeaway:** It is important to reflect on significant objectives: Encompassing a world that is inclusive in its thinking, actions, and essence.

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/world-autism-month-faq#:~:text=Every%20April%20Autism%20Speaks%20celebrates,people%20and%20their%20families%20need.>



# Autism Awareness Swag in your pharmacy





# Engagement

## Increasing Your Sales

How to “Market” to Your Autistic Population  
Employees, **Patients**, Community Stakeholders



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# Neurodiversity

Definition: The concept that there's a lot of variety in how brains work

- An idea of how the brain develops differently, does not necessarily require a “fix”.
- It is an alternative expressions of human neurological development.

**Key Takeaway:** Everyone develops differently and does not mean a remedy is required

# Digital Marketing Toolkit for ASD

What is Autism?

[Flyer](#)

[Infographic](#)

Social Media English Graphics [here](#)

Social Media Spanish Graphics [here](#)

Communication boards [here](#)

# Effective Communication

Below are tips that may help you to communicate more effectively with an autistic person, whether it's your child, pupil, colleague or friend

- Communication boards [here](#)
- [Communication Tips](#)
- [Speech Tablet](#)



# Screening

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDD) recommends all children to be screened for Autism by their family pediatrician three times by the age of three – at 9, 18, and 24 or 30 months.
- Intervention should start when an Autism diagnosis is suspected, rather than when a formal diagnosis is made.

**Key Takeaways:** Pharmacies can incorporate a clinical service around screenings to detect ASD and initiate appropriate therapy

<https://www.cdc.gov/autism/hcp/diagnosis/screening.html>

# How to Screen for Autism

16-30 months	12-60 months	All school aged	16+ years
<a href="#"><u>M-CHAT-R</u></a> <a href="#"><u>PDF</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>SACS-R / SACS-PR</u></a> <a href="#"><u>PDF</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>SCSQ</u></a> <a href="#"><u>PDF</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>AQ</u></a> <a href="#"><u>PDF</u></a>
20 questions about the child's behavior  <a href="#"><u>Available in other languages</u></a>	Identify behaviors and characteristics of children on the spectrum from as young as 12 months old through preschool	15-question Social Challenges Screening Questionnaire	50-question questionnaire used to measure autistic traits

**Key Takeaway:** Pharmacists can utilize the shorter version of SCSQ when monitoring patients as part of their clinical services.

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-screening>

# SDOH and Autism

Since the ADDM began, its reports consistently show differences in autism prevalence across demographic groups, though the reasons remain uncertain.

Shenouda et al. suggest these disparities may result from various individual, environmental, and systemic factors.

Collecting and analyzing data on social determinants of health (SDOH) can clarify these factors and support broader public health equity efforts

**Key Takeaway:** Pharmacies can have a clinical service at their store where they can perform SDOH screenings.

Emily Hotez, Lindsay Shea; Prioritizing Social Determinants of Health in Public Health Surveillance for Autism. *Pediatrics* February 2023; 151 (2): e2022059541. 10.1542/peds.2022-059541

# CPESN® Health Equity

## Local Pharmacies Connecting Community and Patients

CPESN Health Equity is the first special purpose network introduced by CPESN USA to help participating community pharmacies increase revenue, maintain cashflow, and further entrench their local presence. Aggregating health equity initiatives across local networks establishes community pharmacy's collective expertise in Social Determinants of Health service as the value-based marketplace matures.

[Watch](#) this short video to learn about CPESN Health Equity workforce training for Community Health Workers in New York.

[Learn More HERE](#)

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# Medical Conditions Associated with Autism

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/medical-conditions-associated-autism>

- 70% of autistic children have **non typical eating behaviors**
- 35.3% of autistic children (1-17 years) & 21.1% autistic adults (18-64 years)
  - Have **co-occurring ADHD**
- 21% of autistic children experiences **GI complications**
- 17.1% of autistic children (1-17 years) & 26% autistic adults (18-64 years)
  - Have co-occurring **anxiety**
- 5% of autistic children (1-17 years) & 12% of autistic adults (18-64 years)
  - Have co-occurring **epilepsy or seizures**
- 7.5% of autistic children (1-17 years) & 20.2% autistic adults (18-64 years)
  - Have co-occurring **depression**

**Key Takeaway:** Pharmacies can have a clinical service focused on different eating patterns, have an OTC aisle for GI complications, and possibly provide patients with uplifting stickers during each purchase

# Autistic American Health

## Fact Sheet

- Comorbidities often linked with autism include
  - Fragile X
  - Allergies
  - Asthma
  - Epilepsy
  - Bowel disease, Gastrointestinal/digestive disorders
  - Persistent viral infections
  - Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal infections (PANDAS)
  - Feeding disorders
  - Anxiety, bipolar disorder, ADHD
  - Tourette Syndrome, OCD
  - Sensory integration dysfunction
  - Sleeping disorders
  - Immune, autoimmune disorders, and neuroinflammation

# Genetic Testing and Autism

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/expert-opinion/genetic-testing-autism>

It is recommended **people with autism** to undergo genetic testing. While current testing won't provide answers for everyone, not could mean missing out on information that could explain autism's cause and **potential future health issues** for individuals and families

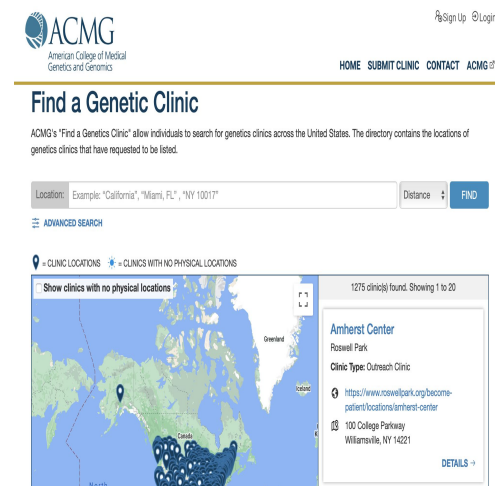
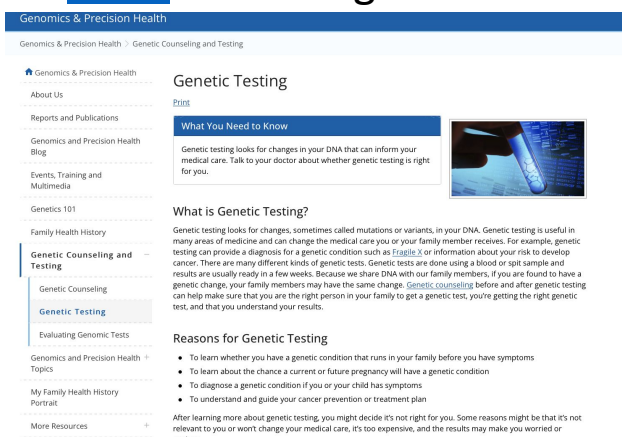
- Exome Sequence - A detailed test, that looks for genetic variations linked to autism that previous tests couldn't. Helpful for people with intellectual disability and, testing for **Fragile X syndrome** is recommended for those with developmental delays, intellectual disability, or autism.

# Pharmacogenomic Testing at Your Pharmacy

CPSN pharmacies have expanded clinical services to ensure pharmacogenomic genetic testing locations for patients to get screened. To start a program at your store contact [atucker@cpsn.com](mailto:atucker@cpsn.com).

CDC has additional information here:

- [CDC's Genetic Testing Information](#) offers resources on what genetic testing is, reasons for genetic testing, types of genetic tests and results, Precision Health, genetics training and multimedia, and next steps after a positive result.
- Click [HERE](#) to find a genetic clinic near you.



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# Vaccination Initiatives in the Autistic

- [The Autism Society](#) initiates a nationwide program Vaccine Education Initiative (VEI) to address misconceptions, advancing patient education and access.
- Individual outreach
- Community Education
- Vaccine Clinics
- Train Healthcare Professionals
- Partnerships

# Vaccination

Vaccines does not cause autism

1. Per the CDC, **routine vaccinations** are highly recommended and no additional required vaccinations in patients with autism
2. Follow the Vaccine Schedule

**Key Takeaway:** Vaccines does not cause Autism. Children presents with early signs of autism when majority of the required vaccines are scheduled.

<https://media.chop.edu/data/files/pdfs/vaccine-education-center-vaccines-fact.pdf>

<https://autismsciencefoundation.org/autism-and-vaccines/>



# Engaging Your Patients

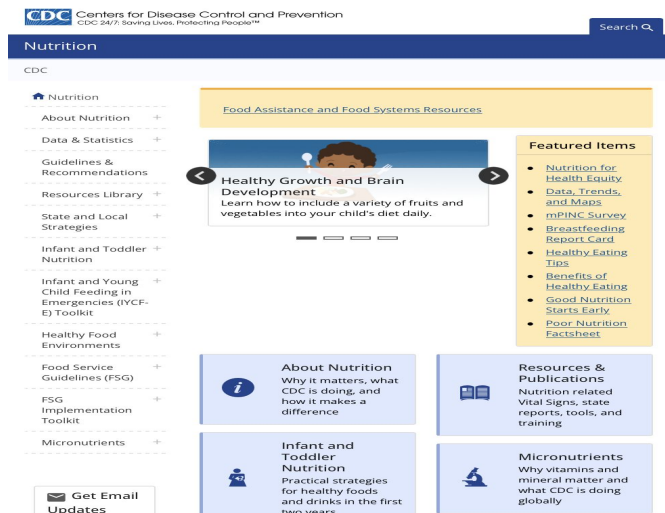
## Pharmacist Counseling

### 1. Diversify your pharmacy staff:

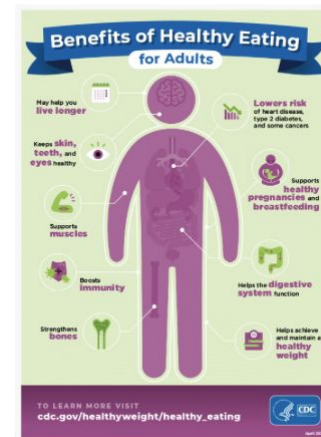
- Hire more staff and healthcare professionals to welcome and assist patients who are seeking services for the first time to create a sense of belonging within the pharmacy.

### 1. Counsel patients about the importance of following a healthy, active lifestyle, balanced diet, and smoking cessation:

- [Nutrition Informational | CDC](#), Nutrition for Health Equity, Healthy Eating Tips, Benefits of Healthy Eating



[Español](#) | [Print](#)



# Engaging Patients:

## Inventory Supply: Products

Friendly Tool Kits provides sensory items for distraction, calming, or motivation during medical appointments to simply waiting at the pharmacy

It also includes visual aids to help patients understand and feel more comfortable with their environment.

**Key Takeaway:** Pharmacies can consider to add these items in their waiting area



Light Spinner



Playdoh



Bubbles



Sunglasses & Headphones



Sensory Ball



Weighted Blankets



Pop Tubes & Chew Tubes



Tablet & Timer



Fidgets



Visual Schedules



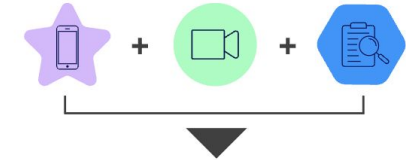
# Engaging Patients:

## FDA Approves New Diagnostic Tool for Autism Spectrum Disorder

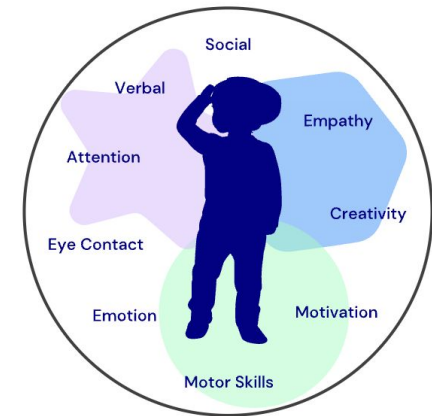
The Cognoa ASD Diagnosis Aid is a medical device software that uses machine learning to analyze input from parents, video analysts, and healthcare providers to help doctors assess patients at risk of ASD

### 3 Inputs

1. Information from healthcare provider
2. Video of child's natural setting
3. Information from parents



### Whole Child Data



cognoa

# Engaging Patients:

## Pharmacist Counseling

- Patients with autism may have a hard time swallowing pills
  - Choose chewable tablets, pills that can be crushed, sublingual, or sprinkled
  - <https://www.seattlechildrens.org/clinics/autism-center/the-autism-blog/medication-tips-and-autism/>
- 
- **Key takeaways:** For safety measures, ensure correct RX label, have parents keep an up to date list of all their children's medications, proper storage, never tell children the medicine is candy

# Engagement

## Community Stakeholders

Networking - Going outside your comfort zone



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# Autism Society of America

## Celebrates April as Autism Acceptance Month

 Autism Society [What Is Autism](#) [Learn More](#) [Get Involved](#) [About Us](#)

[Get Support](#)[Donate Now](#)

## Autism Acceptance Month

This April, the Autism Society of America is proud to continue its sixth annual #CelebrateDifferences campaign in honor of Autism Acceptance Month. Everyday, we work to create connections, empowering everyone in the Autism community to live fully. We believe that acceptance is creating a world where everyone in the Autism community is connected to the support they need, when they need it. And by everyone, we mean every unique individual: *the implacable, inimitable, and irreplaceable you.*

Your support helps us connect Autistic individuals and their networks of support to education, resources, advocacy, and above all, to each other.

<https://autismsociety.org/autism-acceptance-month/?ref=tdmlibrary.thediversitymovement.com>  
<https://autismsociety.org/autism-acceptance-month/>



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# Autism Society

Find participating  
Affiliates and  
resources and events  
in your state

<https://autismsociety.org/vei/>



**Key Takeaway:** Community outreach and advocacy for children and adults with autism

# THE ART OF AUTISM

- [Art of Autism](#)

The journey to autistic empowerment involves a shift from ignorance to awareness, tolerance to acceptance, and ultimately, understanding and valuing diverse communication styles.

- [Art of Autism Upcoming Events](#)

2025

- Southern California artists at a Southern California Museum (More information to come)

# Autism Empowerment

- [Autism Empowerment Organization](#)
- AEO aims to promote acceptance and understanding of individuals with autism and Asperger's syndrome
- Strive to provide support, resources, and opportunities for individuals of all ages to thrive
- Includes demystifying the process of navigating healthcare and education systems, connecting individuals with each other, and empowering them to recognize their strengths, overcome challenges, and advocate for themselves.

# Social Media Support Groups - Online Support Groups

## Autistic kids and teens

- [Friend in Me](#) connecting kids with disabilities and neurotypical student volunteers through free, fun online games and conversations via Zoom on a one-to-one basis every week. Virtual buddy program available!

## Autistic adults

- [Ernie Els Els Center of Excellence](#) adults with autism including The Spoken Wheel Society, meets online every other Friday on Zoom to play a chosen game, an adult connections club, and a mental health support group. Virtual recreation classes available

## Parents

- [MyAutismTeam](#) is a social network specifically for parents of individuals with autism.

## Siblings

- [Sibling Support Project](#) offers both online and local social groups for teenage and adult brothers and sisters of autistic siblings to meet.

## Child of autistic parent(s)

- [Asperger Syndrome: Partners & Family of Adults with ASD](#) based out of Portland, OR is an online Meetup group that hosts events for neurotypical people with a spouse, partner, sibling, parent or grown child who has ASD.
- Specifically it hosts an event for adults with of ASD parents and grew up in a mixed neurotypical/ASD household.



<https://www.autismspeaks.org/finding-your-community>

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# Avoiding, Debunking, Demystifying **Stereotypes**



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# Stereotype

Myth #1 People with autism don't feel emotions

## How is this a stereotype?

- One of the most harmful misconceptions about people with autism is that they don't feel emotions. Autistic individuals are fully capable of feeling all emotions, from happiness and excitement to anxiety and regret, as [Scientific American](#) explains in detail.
- The difference is that some people with autism – and notice that we aren't saying all people with autism – may have a hard time expressing their feelings in the form of words and actions.

## What can pharmacists do?

- Empathy. Encourage them to ask questions, seek second opinions, and actively participate in their healthcare decisions by providing resources and information to help patients make informed decisions about their health when they visit your pharmacy.
- Engage with local communities through health fairs, workshops, and community events and partner with community organizations to address health disparities, promote awareness, and disseminate accurate information about pain perception, health outcomes, and the importance of equitable healthcare.

# Stereotype

Myth #2: People with autism are either geniuses or have intellectual disabilities

## How is this a stereotype?

- This offensive misconception has been perpetuated by popular media depictions of autism, like Dustin Hoffman's performance in the movie *Rain Man*.
- Remember: Autism Spectrum Disorder presents differently in each impacted individual, so it's impossible and belittling to make generalizations about a person's characteristics or intelligence. Some people with autism have average intellectual abilities, others have learning and/or critical-thinking difficulties, and numerous others display high intelligence.

## What can pharmacists do?

- Speak at a fifth-grade level to all patients to foster an inclusive environment within the pharmacy where your interactions and communication are free from biases and education stereotypes. Treat every individual with respect and dignity, valuing their unique qualities and abilities.
- Participate in cultural competence training programs to enhance your understanding of diverse backgrounds, including the historical context and challenges faced by different racial and ethnic groups.

# Stereotype

Myth #3: Autistic people cannot live independently or hold traditional jobs

## How is this a stereotype?

- Many people assume that all individuals with ASD require the assistance of a caregiver and are incapable of workplace excellence. In truth, many individuals with autism live wholly independent lives and find success in a variety of different career fields..
- While those with more severe forms of autism often need help around the house or at work, you should avoid making the assumption that an autistic colleague wants or requires your assistance. Many people with autism can, and prefer, to go about their lives independently.

## What can pharmacists do?

- The first step in this process is to educate yourself, breaking down antiquated narratives and unconscious biases that say people with autism are somehow abnormal, irregular, or broken.
- Commit to learning more about autism in the workplace and [how to act as allies](#) to the ASD community.

# Stereotype

## Myth #4: Vaccines causes autism

### How is this a stereotype?

- Many people assume that vaccines and preservatives cause autism.
- A study in 1998 suggested a correlation between vaccines and ASD and has been debunked
- The author's medical license was later revoked
- While the cause of autism is not exactly known, parents will continue to have doubts
- Parents should be aware of the risks of diseases in unvaccinated children

### What can pharmacists do

- The first step in this process is to educate yourself and patients, breaking down antiquated narratives and unconscious biases that say people with autism are somehow abnormal, irregular, or broken.
- Commit to learning more about autism and vaccines to protect themselves and others



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CPESN® USA is the leader in joining payers, pharmacies, and communities together to provide enhanced health services locally.

[SOLUTIONS FOR PAYERS](#)

[SOLUTIONS FOR PHARMACIES](#)

**Roger Paganelli**  
Pharmacist/Owner, Mt. Carmel Pharmacy - CPESN® NYC

**Bob Lomenick**  
Pharmacist/Owner, Tyson Drugs - CPESN® Mississippi

2023 CPESN® USA Luminaries of the Year



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