

# **Prevalence of Autism in Children with Down Syndrome: A Population-based Study Using State-of-the-Art Assessment Protocols**

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## **Abstract for Coleman Institute**

Although relative strengths in social functioning may exist for many individuals with Down syndrome, some studies suggest that they may actually be at increased risk for autism spectrum disorders relative to those without Down syndrome (Collacott, Cooper & McGrother, 1992; Kent, Evans, Paul & Sharp, 1999; Lund, 1988). Such studies demonstrate that a significant percentage of individuals with Down syndrome evidence social dysfunctions associated with autism spectrum disorders, suggesting that the stereotype of the “affectionate and outgoing” (Gibbs & Thorpe, 1983) child may not hold true for all individuals with Down syndrome.

The primary purpose of this project is to determine the prevalence of autism in a population-based sample of children with Down syndrome. The study has the following design features: (1) sound community-based recruitment strategy grounded in state-of-the-art epidemiologic methodology; (2) utilization of cost-effective and time-efficient developmentally appropriate screening measures; (3) systematic and comprehensive evaluation of autism in children who score positively on the autism screening tool by a highly qualified and experienced team of clinical researchers; and (4) inclusion of measures of alternative – or complementary – factors that may influence the presentation of autism symptoms in a child with Down syndrome. Preliminary data on screening and evaluation results will be presented.