

## **Children with Autism**

Autism is a neuro-developmental disorder which results in problems in communication and speech, social interaction and behavioral patterns. It also causes delay in cognition.

Around 5-7 in 10,000 children are affected by autism, with a male-female ratio of 3 to 4:1. Though it is related to genetic disorders, the exact cause is still unknown . There is no medical cure for autism, but some behavioural symptoms can be improved with medication..

Researchers proposed that autism is caused by abnormalities in the central nervous system, which might be due to hereditary factor, prenatal infection, metabolic diseases or brain injury. Patients often have learning disabilities, epilepsy and behavioural disorders.

Symptoms of Autism usually appear around 1.5 to 2 years old. These children have difficulties in communicating with others, especially in understanding and expressing themselves They have poor eye contact with people as well. They have repetitive and ritualistic behavior and are quite stubborn in specific things.

Since no medication is available, various therapies had been tried hoping to improve their communication skills, including play therapy, behavioral therapy, sensory integration therapy, art therapy, music therapy, auditory integration therapy, optometry therapy, detoxification etc. However, currently there is lack of scientific evidence to show the beneficial effect to Autistic children.

In order to study the use of "Alternative Medicine" strategy for Autism, the Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, LKS Faculty of Medicine, of the University of Hong Kong had collaborated with Duchess of Kent Children's Hospital and Tung Wah Eastern Group of Hospitals, to launch a randomized control trial of Body & Electrical acupuncture for 100 children with Autism in 2003. Currently 60 children with autism had completed the research and a further 40 children will be recruited. Interested parties can email to [pyllam@hku.hk](mailto:pyllam@hku.hk) for recruitment.