

## SEX DIFFERENCES IN THE INCIDENCE AND EXPRESSION OF AUTISM

### S u m m a r y

Autism is a pervasive developmental disorder that occurs more frequently in boys than in girls. Though this phenomenon is widely known, very few studies focused on the relationship between sex and autism. It may be supposed that there are genetic factors related to sex differences in the incidence of autism. Some genetic pathologies specific for males and related to autism, such as fragile chromosome X, have been identified. Little is also known about the relationship of sex and the

expression and the severity of traits associated with autism. It was found that during the early stages of life, girls were rated to be less severely autistic than boys on several measures of social development: communication, initiating social play, and seeking comfort in relations with an other person. Later on these relations were reversed. Complete interpretation of the observed differences is not possible before more data are collected.