Nourishing Hope for Autism

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Autism Informed Consent Must Include Hope:

Biology and Nutrition Move Further Into the Autism Medical Conversation

Emerging federal research priorities and leading autism health conferences signal growing recognition of whole-body health, individual biology and personalized nutrition in autism care.

Issued by Martin Matthews, Co-founder and Director of Nourishing Hope

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — What if some of the symptoms attributed simply to "autism" are influenced by underlying health conditions that can be identified and addressed?

That question is moving increasingly into the medical conversation.

This week, the Medical Academy of Pediatric Special Needs (MAPS) convenes physicians and health professionals in Philadelphia for its Fall 2026 conference, **"Redefining Autism: Brain-Based Subtypes and Their Clinical Implications."** Its program examines autism through biomedical thinking, functional medicine, nutrition, metabolic and mitochondrial dysfunction, gastrointestinal health, immune dysfunction and neurology.

Julie Matthews, MS, a published nutrition researcher and educator who has specialized in autism for 25 years, will present her clinical experience and the foundational nutrition curriculum.

In November, Matthews will also present at the Documenting Hope Health & Healing Expo, where researchers, clinicians and families will explore the interconnected roles of the microbiome, nervous system, mitochondria, metabolism, nutrition and other influences on health.

The shift extends to federal autism research priorities. The 2026–2028 Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC) Strategic Plan Working Draft calls for greater investigation of biologically meaningful subgroups and therapeutic domains including gastrointestinal biology, microbiome function and nutrition, immune and inflammatory biology, and mitochondrial and metabolic function.

Together, these developments signal an important evolution: **autism healthcare is increasingly examining the biology beneath the diagnosis—and what can be done when modifiable health factors are identified.**

Full release and accompanying materials:
nourishinghope.com/autism-informed-consent-must-include-hope

The Evidence for Nourishing Hope Is Already Here

Nourishing Hope is the process of using science-backed nutrition strategically—understanding individual biology and nutritional needs, taking informed action, and refining the approach based on response.

A substantial body of research has examined the relationships between nutrition, diet and autism. Among that evidence are two peer-reviewed studies co-authored by Matthews and leading autism researcher James Adams, PhD, who leads the Autism/Asperger's Research Program at Arizona State University.

A 12-month randomized controlled trial published in *Nutrients* found significant improvements in nutritional and metabolic status, developmental progress and autism-related symptoms among participants receiving a comprehensive nutritional and dietary intervention.

In 2023, Matthews and Adams published research in the *Journal of Personalized Medicine* examining caregiver-reported outcomes from **13 therapeutic diets used for autism.** Caregivers reported benefits across all 13 therapeutic diets studied, reinforcing the importance of matching nutritional strategies to individual needs.

In 2026, a literature review and case report published in *Integrative Medicine* by researchers affiliated with Documenting Hope documented the elimination of autism symptoms in a child following a Specific Carbohydrate Diet intervention, with long-term follow-up showing an ADOS score of zero at age 18. The authors also reviewed decades of research on medical nutrition therapy for autism and called for further investigation.

Every child needs nourishment. The appropriate nutritional strategy will differ from person to person, but the relevance of nutrition does not. Families deserve to know these possibilities exist.

From Evidence to Informed Consent

“For 25 years, I've watched Julie and other pioneering clinicians and researchers build the evidence that food and nutrition can influence health, learning and behavior in autism,” said **Martin Matthews, co-founder of Nourishing Hope and the BioIndividual Nutrition Institute.**

“Now we're watching leading medical organizations, researchers and federal autism priorities converge around many of these same biological systems. **The question is no longer whether nutrition matters in autism. The question is whether we are willing to act on what we already know.**”

For Nourishing Hope, that makes this fundamentally an issue of informed consent.

Families deserve to know that gastrointestinal health, nutritional status, metabolism, inflammation and other biological factors can influence health and function—and that personalized nutrition offers an actionable way to support individual needs.

Families should not have to discover these possibilities on their own.

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For more than two decades, Nourishing Hope has advanced this whole-person, personalized approach to autism nutrition.

As autism itself is being more deeply investigated and understood, healthcare has a corresponding responsibility: **families deserve to know what science and clinical experience show about the potential to improve health and function—and the role personalized nutrition can play.**

Autism informed consent must include hope.

About Julie Matthews, MS

Julie Matthews, MS, is an award-winning author, published researcher and pioneer in personalized nutrition for autism and related conditions. She holds a master's degree in medical nutrition, with distinction, from Arizona State University and is co-author of peer-reviewed autism nutrition research published in *Nutrients* and the *Journal of Personalized Medicine*. She is the author of *The Personalized Autism Nutrition Plan* and *Nourishing Hope for Autism.*

About Nourishing Hope and BioIndividual Nutrition Institute

Nourishing Hope provides science-based nutrition education and practical guidance for families affected by autism and related conditions. The *BioIndividual Nutrition Institute* provides advanced therapeutic nutrition education and professional training for health practitioners.

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