



New Born Alliance for Autism Care and Research: An Italian Experience

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Rec date: 29 April 2016; Acc date: 05 May 2016; Pub date: 12 May, 2016

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Citation: Siniscalco D, Brigida AL, Brighenti M (2016) New Born Alliance for Autism Care and Research: An Italian Experience. Autism Open Access 6: e139. doi: 10.4172/2165-7890.1000e139

Editorial

The attention for autism keeps going. Following the promulgation of the first specific Italian law on autism and the Written Declaration on Autism of the European Union, several initiatives have been undertaken in order to ensure the protection of health, living conditions and to improve the social life of autistic people and their families in Italy [1,2].

In the Italian school system, the Ministry of Education has issued the so called “Scolastic Window”, a service born to improve the scholastic inclusion of autistic schoolchildren, through networking and also supporting teachers. The research agreement between public and private has also been included in this project.

Recently, a brand-new initiative has been raised on the basis of the new law and EU declaration. The Center for Autism Diagnosis Care and Research-Childhood Neuropsychiatry Unit of the Local Health Agency of Verona, together with the University of Verona and the Second University of Naples, has promoted a joint collaborationship among healthcare system, universities and several national autism associations (no profit associations: ABAL, Ametiste, Anffas, Centostelle, Luna, Sguardi di Luce, Fondazione della Comunità Veronese, Costruire, Cancellautismo, La Forza del Silenzio). For the first time in Italy there is a huge collaboration ship between public and private institutions/associations to set up new research projects in autism.

The aims of the new-born alliance will be:

Fundraising to support new research proposals, above all on biomedical autism treatment projects. This point is very important, as currently funding opportunities in Italy (but also in EU) are too often inadequate to provide a complete research environment. Fundraising projects will be also web-based.

To explore the feasibility to set up a foundation in order to better achieve strategic funding plans.

To elaborate a large data-base, also omic-based, on immunological findings of autistic children. This point will help in characterizing the several autistic sub-phenotypes and in providing better therapeutic options.

The new research projects will be ensured by the qualified universities and healthcare agencies that agreed to collaborate. Detailed research projects will study new molecules that could be novel potential drugs to address autism in the next future, as well as study epigenetic changes in autism.

This project is very challenging and is its infancy, but it will provide a new opportunity for autism care and research in Italy.

References

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