

# Rising epidemiology of autism? Real –life observations from a French first line regional dispensary

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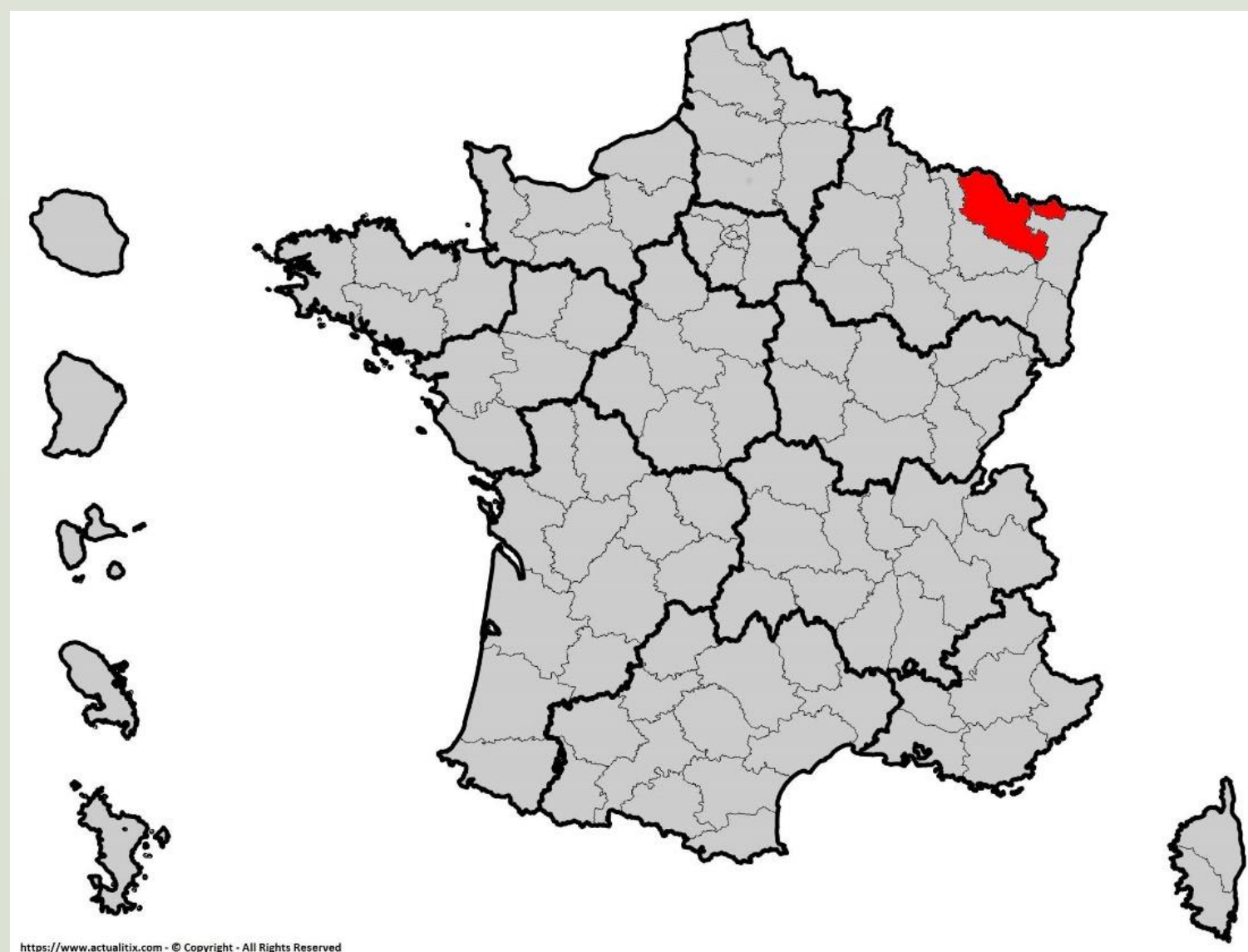
## Introduction

There is a growing body of global evidence indicating an increasing prevalence of autistic spectrum disorders in children over the past few decades. Our focus is on a primary care center for pediatric developmental disorders situated in the eastern part of the Moselle area in France, serving a population of 350,000 inhabitants.

## Objectives

In order to assess the trend in autism incidence, we conducted a prospective review spanning two periods: 2004-2008 and 2018-2022, utilizing consistent diagnostic criteria.

Figure 1 : Moselle department in France



## MATERIALS AND METHODS

We conducted a prospective evaluation of all children diagnosed with autism < 6 years, following the DSM IV (first period) and the DSM V (second period) criteria in the north-east part of the Moselle department. All data were gathered from personal practice. We collected informations about gender, address, neurologic and genetic workup, geographic origin of parents (whether they originated from European Union or not)

## RESULTS

Our findings reveal a noteworthy doubling of figures over a 10-year interval, from about 6-10 new cases a year to at least 20 a year in the second period. The estimated incidence figures jumped from **0.2% to 0.6%** of all births, acknowledging that our figures are not exhaustive for the territory. **14%** of children had a neurologic or genetic disease that could play a role in the onset of the disease. **3.1%** of the children were born from consanguineous unions.

Between the two periods, we found:

- A slight increase in female cases :from **14.6% to 17%**,  $p=0.34$  not statistically significant.
- The age at diagnosis was not significantly different: **37.4 months** in the first period vs **39.9 months** in the second period,  $p= 0.92$
- The percentage of extra-European parents raised moderately: from **14% to 22%**,  $p=0.67$

numbers of autism cases in Moselle-East

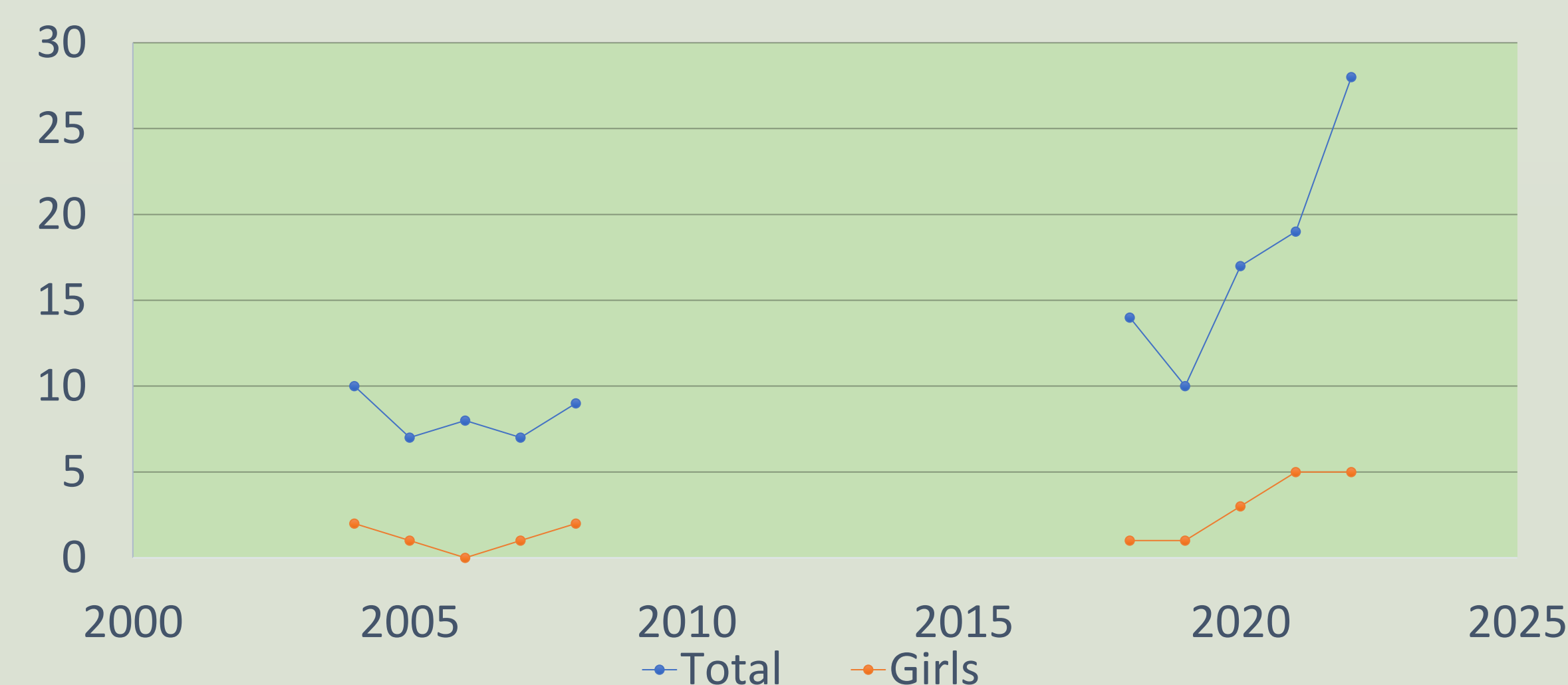


Figure 2: numbers of new children < 6 years with autism

## CONCLUSIONS

Our data are consistent with existing literature, which shows a progression of autistic children cases with an incidence of 1 to 1.9% in developed countries(1-4). The reasons underlying this increase are not related to the modified DSM criteria but could be attributed the better awareness among health professionals, as well as environmental factors yet to be elucidated (5). The role of migrations of population seems to be a paramount factor.

## REFERENCES

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS and CONTACT

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