Epilogue

“Anecdotal” is often used as a pejorative term in scientific circles, meaning unreliable. In practice it often means isolated, and therefore hard to assess. Think of a new field of science as a large jigsaw puzzle. Pieces are discovered one by one, and at first they are unlikely to fit together to make a picture. Things can look distinctly unpromising, sometimes for decades. But if you can bear the pain of feeling stupid and humiliation of being wrong, anecdotal evidence is the call of the wild, the sunset sign of the undiscovered. Columbus set sail on the basis of anecdotal evidence. The Mayan hieroglyphs were deciphered using anecdotal evidence. Life-saving remedies based on plants, such as aspirin and digitalis, were found by scientists who paid attention to anecdotal evidence.

Luca Turin, 2007, *The Secret of Scent*

Why do we have so many endocrine disturbing chemicals (EDCs) in our environment? Why is autism spectrum disorder (ASD) rising? Why is legal protection lacking to shield our offspring from synthetic chemicals? Special interest groups and the viral topics of the day, whether based on accurate scientific evidence or not, often dominate public discussion. The recent documentary, “Vaxxed” [1], illustrates how certain agendas may be pushed forward shifting attention from where it needs to be focused to better understand the mechanisms underlying autism – examining the scientific evidence [1]. Misinformation on autism has had detrimental effects, as has been seen with recent outbreaks of diseases easily prevented by vaccines in communities that have under-vaccinated their children, such as the recent outbreaks of measles in Minnesota in the spring of 2017.

However, the situation is not hopeless. If we want to make a difference to our future generations, we have to act.
In this book we have done our best to present scientific data that were originally anecdotal observations. Many may think that the whole of ASD is essentially an anecdotal field of science that combines biology, psychology, social science, humanities, neurology, neuroscience, neuroimmunology, neuropsychoimmunology, immunology, developmental biology, embryology, endocrinology, toxicology, organic chemistry, physics, music therapy, special education, radiology, computation medicine, and so on, and so many areas of research and science and medicine that it is a giant jigsaw puzzle. This jigsaw has millions of pieces and it is yet to be fully assembled. We have attempted to bring some of these pieces together so that we can at least bring a picture that is still way out of focus into focus. We do not claim to have all the answers or even part of the answers to the autism conundrum. We hope that readers will forgive us for any errors and occasional monolithic concepts. Our goal is to try to gather as many pieces together as possible in this book. We hope to add new pieces so that the blurred picture of autism may become more focused.

We request that readers point out any errors and help us make this puzzle more solvable. A Facebook Page (https://www.facebook.com/autismandenvironmentalfactors/?notif_id=1512833578907283&notif_t=page_admin) has been created for this book and we hope to hear from readers so that the underlying mechanisms of autism may become visible and to help stem the alarming rise of autism cases.

Each of those affected by autism, those silent offspring, represents a piece of the puzzle – a shining star that never got the chance to glow!

Let us find a way together to quash the “invisible smells” and prevent autism. The next time you add fragrance crystals to your laundry, remember Chapter 1 and the section “Smell of Autism”. The next time you wear perfume, reread Chapter 7’s section “Contribution of Fragrances to ASD”. The next time you spray herbicide in your yard, look again at Figure 1.4 which shows the correlation between autism prevalence and glyphosphate applied to crops.

We believe no one has presented the predicament of human life more accurately than Rachel Carson in her book *Silent Spring* when she stated [2]:

> As crude a weapon as the cave man’s club, the chemical barrage has been hurled against the fabric of life – a fabric on the one hand delicate and destructible, on the other miraculously tough and resilient, and capable of striking back in unexpected ways. These extraordinary capacities of life have been ignored by the practitioners of chemical control who have brought to their task no "high-minded orientation," no humility before the vast forces with which they tamper.

We hope that the next generation – our offspring – are born without the threat of synthetic chemicals that affect their brains while they are still in the womb and EDCs that change their DNA, epigenetics, and hormones.
References
