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Dr. Linda Restifo received her B.A. (Biology), M.D., and Ph.D. (Genetics) degrees from the University of Pennsylvania. As a graduate student, she studied the molecular genetics of steroid-hormone-regulated gene expression during development. She completed three years of postgraduate clinical training in Internal Medicine and Neurology, the latter at Harvard Medical School hospitals, including Boston Children's Hospital. During her postdoctoral research training at Brandeis University, she merged her scientific and clinical interests in a project to determine how genes control brain remodeling during development.

Dr. Restifo directs a developmental neurogenetics research program, with an emphasis on how mutations and environmental exposures cause intellectual disability (a/k/a mental retardation) and autism. Her research team has developed novel strategies to both better understand and treat developmental brain disorders. Their goal is to identify safe and effective drug therapies that improve cognitive function of patients with these disorders. This would represent a dramatic improvement in the medical approach toward diagnosis and treatment of children with developmental delay or cognitive/behavioral problems. Dr. Restifo is also interested in the connection between brain aging and brain development. She is testing the hypothesis that genetic influences on brain maturation can also influence successful cognitive aging, or be risk factors for aging-related neurodegeneration.

The Restifo lab uses bioinformatics, molecular genetics, and cell biology, primarily in the fruit fly genetic model system. With funding from the National Institutes of Health and Autism Speaks, Dr. Restifo and colleagues have developed a novel cellular bioassay, based on primary culture of developing brain neurons, that can reveal defects caused by mutations or toxins. They have recently completed a proof-of-concept drug screen and have encouraging results from cross-species validation studies. Collaborators include human geneticists, computer scientists, computational chemists, mechanical engineers, cancer biologists, pediatrics physicians, a neuroethologist, as well as other neuroscientists.

AZ Public Media visits the Restifo Lab: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnPrpHF_Yos&feature=youtu.be
<http://www.uanews.org/story/research-reveals-possible-reason-for-cholesterol-drug-side-effects>