Critics of John Travolta 's church, the Church of Scientology, are claiming that his 16-year-old son Jett was autistic and was not given the proper diagnosis and/or treatments because Scientology disapproves of psychiatric and drug treatment of autism, also rejecting psychiatry as a pseudoscience. Jett died last week while on holiday with his parents, apparently from a fall in the hotel bathroom. In 2007, Ocala, Florida, restaurant manager Tim Kenny, the father of an autistic child himself, and who committed suicide in March of last year at age 41, said he'd asked Travolta what special treatment Jett was getting:

As one autistic child's father to another, I asked him if he was doing anything special in terms of therapy for Jett. Travolta responded, "Well, we involve him in the arts"... Scientology is keeping him from acknowledging his son's autism. They see it as a weakness.

The Travolta's lawyer said claims that the Travoltas were negligent in their care of Jett are outrageous, and he has released a report that Jett was treated for several years with the medication Depakote - which treats epilepsy and/or seizures. Maybe. If Jett was autistic and was not given the proper diagnosis or treatments because his parent's religious beliefs prevented him from getting these advantages, that needs to be said. Critics claim that Scientology disapproves of psychiatric and drug treatment of autism, and also rejects psychiatry, calling it a pseudoscience.

Experts who viewed a video released of Jett recently easily diagnosed autism or autism spectrum disorder - ASD. All the expected symptoms were present and apparent. He had no use of speech and was not provided any autism speech-related therapy. Some 25% of all ASD victims develop epilepsy, usually during their teen years. There are many treatments known for this disorder, if religious beliefs don't intervene. Scientology denies psychological behavior disorders, including autism and ASD.

The drug Depakote is a treatment for epilepsy/seizures, not for autism. While we have to wait for the autopsy reports, we hope that these are made public and are strictly objective and unbiased. At this present stage of the investigation this seems to have been an accident, and whether the Travoltas treated their son for autism or not, there are effective medical treatments and therapies that can help significantly. Deliberately withholding those treatments because of misguided religious belief is apparently not illegal.

Scientology's attempts to block people from criticizing them are well known, and regardless of the final findings, I cannot see that there will be any reconsideration among its followers, even though it's now becoming more evident to everyone else that Scientology just doesn't work. There are many treatments for autism that *do* work, and therapy that could have enabled Jett Travolta to communicate.

However, if these allegations are not true, the speculations should be ignored and the Travoltas should be left to properly handle this personal tragedy.

I look forward to the official autopsy report.