

ASD-CARC Trainees eNewsletter

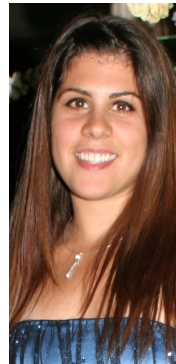
Volume 2 April, 2008

Introducing your eNewsletter Committee

Jessica Schroeder is a second year MA student in the Clinical-Developmental Psychology program at York University. Her interest in ASDs stems from her work as an IBI therapist with young children with autism. Under the supervision of Dr. James Bebko, her current research examines cognitive processing in individuals with Asperger's syndrome and autism. Jessica is particularly interested in learning about how individuals with an ASD integrate what they see and what they hear during speech using an audiovisual illusion. She has gained a multidisciplinary perspective to research in ASDs through attending the videoconferences and the Summer Institute, and looks forward to furthering that knowledge base through work with her secondary mentor.



Danielle Savona is a graduate student at Brock University, working on her MA in Child and Youth Studies under the supervision of Dr. Maurice Feldman and Dr. Tricia Vause. Her research focus is on teaching money skills to school-aged children with autism spectrum disorder using stimulus equivalence. The present research may provide preliminary evidence towards the use of this teaching technology in EIBI programs. Danielle has also had experience working with Dr. Adrienne Perry at York University on a project which evaluates the quality of IBI to preschool children.



Kerri Walters is a PhD student in the Applied Behaviour Analysis program at the University of Manitoba working under the supervision of Dr. C. T. Yu. Kerri's research focuses on teaching perspective taking skills to children with autism spectrum disorders and identifying the relationship between language and performance on perspective taking tasks. In addition to her research Kerri works as a Consultant for the St. Amant ABA program in Winnipeg Manitoba, providing services to children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders in home and school based ABA programs.



June 2008 eNewsletter Request for Submissions

Dear Trainees,

Please send us your feedback and any suggestions, or potential topics for upcoming eNewsletters. Our next eNewsletter will include comments about different therapies for autism. Trainees will include references to research which supports a particular therapy, and research which does not support the particular therapy.

Trainee Conference Summaries

As part of our training many students attend conferences around the world to learn about current research within their fields of study. This section of the eNewsletter was designed to invite trainees to share their experiences from the conferences they've attended over the past year.

Trainee
Lindsay Arnal

Training Site
University of
Manitoba

Conference
16th Annual St
Amant
Conference

In October 2007, I attended the 16th Annual St Amant Conference which took place in Winnipeg Manitoba. The conference highlighted new research, practice

and training methods with respect to several developmental disabilities including autism.

For those who are not familiar, St Amant is a residential care facility for individuals with developmental disabilities, located in Winnipeg. It also offers both preschool and school age ABA Services for children with autism. In addition, St Amant is also known for its active research program. Functioning as a research base for many undergraduate and graduate students, it is a well-established and well-equipped research facility providing training and learning opportunities in areas such as autism.

While at the conference I had the opportunity to display a poster summarizing my honours thesis

which focused on the assessment of a self-instructional method for training individuals to work with children with autism. During the poster session I was able to answer questions and discuss my findings with several individuals attending the conference. It was extremely valuable to obtain feedback from a wide variety of individuals including fellow students, consultants, clinicians, parents and professors. It was great to see others take an interest in the study and to have them provide both constructive feedback and positive suggestions for future research in the area.

Several posters and symposia were presented over the course of the conference. One that I found particularly interesting was a talk given by Dr. Daniela Fazzio and Kerri Walters entitled "What is functional analysis and how to do it". Functional Analysis (FA) is a methodology for the identification of variables that influence the occurrence of challenging behaviours. The presentation addressed the rationale, methodology, interpretation of results, and how the information is used to design an intervention.

I found this presentation to be both highly informative and enjoyable. The aspect that I enjoyed most about this presentation was its "case and point" format. First, Dr. Fazzio provided a brief but thorough introduction on the process of functional analysis. This was then followed by Kerri's description of her research project demonstrating the application of functional analysis. It was fantastic to hear about the concept and then see the data to support the theory. Presentations such as these are what make the St Amant conference such a valuable event for individuals working, researching, and living with developmental disabilities.

Trainee
Kristen McFee

Training Site
York
University

Conference
RSIG-OADD
Conference

My name is Kristen McFee and I am a second year Doctoral student in the Clinical-Developmental Psychology program at York University, where my

Trainee Conference Summaries continued...

research focuses on the early cognitive development of children with autism. Attending as both a co-author of a research poster and member of the RSIG committee, the conference provided an excellent opportunity to network with other students, professors, and professionals in the field of autism and developmental disabilities (DD). Research presented covered a breadth of topics including intensive behavioral intervention for children with autism, dual diagnosis, maltreatment and social-emotional functioning of individuals with DD, and the use of videoconferencing for psychological assessment, among others. Further, presenters reflected the multidisciplinary field of DD, ranging from clinical psychologists and social workers to occupational therapists.

I found a number of presentations and posters very interesting. In particular, the presentation, "Evaluation of Psychological Assessment using Videoconferencing Technology: A Pilot Study" by Dr. Valerie Temple (Surrey Place Centre), outlined the innovative use of this technology for the psychological assessment of individuals with DD living in rural Ontario. These techniques are proving to be reliable and considerably enjoyable for all those involved in

the assessment process, and more importantly provide families with greater access to services they would ordinarily have to travel long distances to receive. I am sure this study will provide a basis for future research and use of this technology within other mental health organizations.

Another interesting series of presentations pertained to early intensive behavioral intervention (IBI) for children with autism. Abbie Solish presented a study on "Parent Involvement in IBI" programs. She characterized parent involvement in IBI as related to a number of factors such as parent's (1) belief in IBI, (2) stress, (3) knowledge of autism and IBI, (4) self-efficacy, and (5) perception of child progress. The results of her study show that parent self-efficacy is the strongest predictor of parent involvement. The next step is to determine the impact of parent involvement on child outcomes in IBI programs. Dr. Adrienne Perry presented on "Outcomes for Children in the Ontario IBI Programs". The results of this study provide considerable evidence for the 'effectiveness' of IBI programs. That is, these programs are not only successful in controlled research settings but also work in the real world, under less ideal conditions. In general, the 332 children in this study level,

improved significantly in terms of their severity of autism, cognitive adaptive behavior, and rate of development. Further, results showed that children who entered these IBI programs earlier and for longer durations had the most favorable outcomes.

In summary, RSIG provided an excellent avenue to exchange research findings, as well as foster and create partnerships with neighboring universities and mental health organizations.

Trainee Alice Pritchard	Title of talk: Generalizing Peer-Mediated Social Skills Training Beyond the Classroom: Schools'
Training Site York University	Implementation of Social Skills Training
Conference ONTABA- November	

Authors: Carmen Hall and Charmaine Chadwick

Summary (partly taken from the abstract):

With socialization being one of the three major deficits of children with autism, helping children with autism learn how to interact with peers effectively is very challenging. The authors of the talk presented a program geared at teaching social skills to children with autism. P.E.E.R. Pals (Peers Establishing Effective Relationships) promotes and develops meaningful

Trainee Conference Summaries continued...

opportunities at school for children with autism to interact socially with others. The program works by not only teaching specific social skills to children with autism, but also to the other children in the classroom and by assisting teachers in creating these opportunities. These skills are then generalized to other environments. Other objectives of the program are to enhance disability awareness among children and adults in the schools in which the program is implemented. A major goal of the authors was to create a program that was sustainable from year to year. There are two main components to the program: a) a teaching component that incorporates structured teaching in the classroom; and, b) an activities component that involves typically developing at recess time, which builds on the skills taught in the classroom.

The authors' work is guided by research conducted by Thiemann & Goldstein (2001 & 2004) that

promotes using adult guided direct instruction and training peers without disabilities to teach social skills to people with disabilities (see below for recommended readings).

The authors were very animated about the program and presented preliminary qualitative data on a pilot project with some schools in London, Ontario. They plan on collecting quantitative data from intervention and control schools in the upcoming year. A unique aspect of this research was the emphasis placed on building solid and trustworthy relationships with the school board and teachers with whom they were working. Instead of going into the school with a pre-determined plan of how to implement the program, the authors described how they worked collaboratively with teachers to come up with ways that would not hinder a teacher's main teaching goals and not lead to the burden of more work. This is very important in my field of study, behavioural intervention for children with autism, as it

promotes the development of a collaborative model with the school that will lead to the best outcomes for children with autism who are included in regular classrooms. I look forward to hearing about the results of their future research, which the authors hope to present at ONTABA, 2008.

Recommended readings:

Thiemann, K. S., Goldstein, H. (2001). Social stories, written text cues, and video feedback: Effects on social communication of children with Autism. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 34, 425-446

Thiemann, K. S., Goldstein, H. (2004). Effects of peer training and written text cueing on social communication of school-age children with Pervasive Developmental Disorder. *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research*, 47, 126-144.

Questions? Suggestions? Please contact us at
ASD-CARC! We would love to hear your feedback!