

Another piece



Issue 12, June 2011

Olga Tennison
AUTISM RESEARCH CENTRE
 A U S T R A L I A

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They're bubbling along at the Margot Prior Wing

The sensory feature has now been installed in the entrance hallway to the Margot Prior Wing at the Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre. It symbolises the sensory interests of a large majority of children diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Sensory aspects of the environment can often serve to reduce anxiety commonly experienced by children with ASD, particularly when entering new settings.

The sensory bubble tubes also serve to highlight to staff and visitors the sensory issues children with ASD face daily.

The tubes will of course be of great interest to the children themselves. Special thanks to McArthur Personnel, whose generous donation made this sensory feature possible.

Turn to Page 4 – 7 to read an interview with Dr Cynthia Zierhut about ESDM

ASDs affect approximately 1% of the population (i.e., 1:100 individuals) 3 out of 4 people affected are male. - Autism Speaks, USA

Donations

To fund our research activities we rely on the support of private and corporate donors. Our thanks are extended to the individuals and organisations who have made donations to the [Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre](#).

Donations can be made online or through mail and telephone. To access these options go to www.latrobe.edu.au/foundation.

Remember to specify that your donation is for the [Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre \(OTARC\)](#). Please note that all donations to La Trobe University are tax deductible. If you need more information, please call (03) 9479 2497 or email otarc@latrobe.edu.au

Recent donors include:

The staff of ACER (on World Autism Awareness Day)
Students and staff within La Trobe University
Mrs Maryon Walters
Mrs Olga Tennison



WAAD April 2

The Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre dressed in blue for World Autism Awareness Day (April 2). To promote the day to staff and students, the group also hosted an OTARC table in the Agora at lunchtime. The main purpose was to raise awareness of Autism ASD, and over \$160 was raised on the day.

Here are Josie and Cherie, hard at work.

The Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre
Annual General Meeting
Friday July 22, 2011 at 10am
at LTU Bundoora Campus
For more information contact
otarc@latrobe.edu.au

Donate to Autism research using Richies' Community Benefits card

You need to enter [Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre](#) on the form, with the **CB number: 81629**.

For your nearest Richies Supermarket or Liquor store check Richies website at www.ritchies.com.au

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair— Prof Margot Prior, LTU, Melbourne University, and RCH

Associate Professor Cheryl Dissanayake, Centre Director, LTU

Professor Tim Brown, DVC Research, LTU

Professor Brian McGaw, Dean of Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering, LTU

Prof David Finlay, Chair University Human Ethics Committee, LTU

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Professor Robin Williams, Director of Alumni & Advancement, LTU

Professor Christine Bigby, School of Social Work, LTU

Dr Catherine Marraffa, Senior Paediatrician, RCH

Dr Jacqueline Roberts, Associate Professor, University of Sydney, NSW

Mr Oreste Pompetti, Finance & Administration Manager EPIC Centre

Ms Lia Castorina, Team Leader - Autism Advisor Program, Autism Victoria

Ms Cherie Green, PhD candidate, LTU Student representative

Director's Report

Welcome

I am writing my report prior to departing for a two week sojourn to the south island of New Zealand. I will be attending the Australasian Human Development Association Biennial Meeting in Dunedin in early July, and vacationing with my family for the week prior. My return to Melbourne will mark the end of my 6-month sabbatical, when I shall resume my usual duties as Director. I would like to extend my thanks to all our staff, especially Dr Elfriede Ihsen and A/Prof Amanda Richdale, for ensuring the smooth running of the Centre in my absence.

As you will read, many of us have recently attended the International Meeting for Autism Research in San Diego. This was the largest meeting yet, with over 2000 attendees.



Associate Professor Dissanayake with the group she trained in Poland



Associate Professor Cheryl Dissanayake, PhD MAPS

Prior to this meeting, I had the pleasure of training an exceptional multidisciplinary team of clinicians on the early identification of ASDs in Poland. This group of six dedicated staff, headed by Dr Joanna Kwarsiborska (see picture below), run a privately funded clinic called Adesse in central Warsaw where they offer evidence-based intervention and diagnostic services. Hopefully, they will be offering these to increasingly younger children, following the training they undertook.

Staff at OTARC have been busy setting up our new Early Diagnostic Clinic for ASDs, which will open at the beginning of July. Also, July marks the one year anniversary of the opening of the Margot Prior Wing at La Trobe. We have published an interview with the new Clinical Manager of our Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre who we introduced readers to in the last edition. And speaking of anniversaries, this month completes our third year of operation. I would like to thank all of you for your continued support, and I hope you enjoy reading this edition of Another Piece.

Dr Cynthia Zierhut talks about Early Start Denver Model as adopted by the Margot Prior Wing, Autism Specific Early Learning & Care Centre.

A quiet word with Cynthia

"I've been working in the area of autism research since my training but in the last five years have concentrated on early treatment."

Can you tell me a little about yourself?

I am married with three beautiful sons, 13, 10 and 8. When I am not working my interests centre around my children, in their sporting and music endeavours. When I get time alone I practice yoga and I love hiking.

Where did you work before coming to the Margot Prior Wing (MPW)?

I'm a clinical and developmental psychologist. I received my Ph.D. from UCLA under the supervision of Prof Marian Sigman, who is an eminent researcher in autism. After finishing my degree I moved to Sacramento to the M.I.N.D. (Medical Investigation of Neuro-Developmental Disorders) Institute at UC Davis where I started working with Prof Sally Rogers who is a prolific researcher and skilled clinician in the field of autism. She is working on a wide range of projects within the field of autism and is now well-known for her work in developing the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM), an early intervention program for very young children with Autism Spectrum Disorders.



What is your experience with the Early Start Denver Model of Intervention for young children with autism?

I've been working in the area of autism research since my training but in the last five years have concentrated on early treatment. Dr. Rogers is currently doing a large replication study of the ESDM, in a multi-site randomised control trial and my role was to oversee the clinical treatment activities of the children enrolled at the UC Davis site. The goal of this replication is to further support the earlier findings on ESDM and Dr. Rogers hopes to highlight predictors of treatment

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“The process is very rigorous and often underestimated. People who are usually interested in it are often already working with children with autism and it requires a high level of commitment, dedication and planning to undergo this training.”

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response. In science a randomised controlled trial is the most rigorous means of studying if a treatment is effective, and replication is important.

I'm also trained in the ESDM as a therapist, a parent coach and a trainer, which is how I came to Australia the first time in 2009.

How do you become an ESDM therapist?

The route to certification is outlined on the [MIND Institute website](#).

Essentially to become a therapist you need a certain level of experience in working with children with autism. You need to read the manual and attend the introductory and advanced workshops; submit a package including an assessment as part of the ESDM, a video tape of your work and a self-evaluation rated on the fidelity system. There are two submissions. The first is to get feedback. The second is to determine if the person is working at a high enough level to get certification.

The process is very rigorous and often underestimated. People who are usually interested in it are often already working with children with autism and it requires a high level of commitment, dedication and planning to undergo this training. The ESDM requires a lot of skills and creative thinking. In the ESDM, the framework for teaching is the joint activity, which is where two people co-construct an activity together. At the same time, the therapist is targeting multiple objectives.

It requires a lot of practice before certification. Once certified at the first level, a person can work one-on-one with a child using ESDM. This does not mean that they can train others or teach the parents the ESDM, those activities require further certification. In Australia the only certified therapists working in ESDM are in the Margot Prior Wing at La Trobe University and in New South Wales in their Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre, at **KU Children's Centre**. One of our concerns is that some people, outside the centre, have been advertising that they provide ESDM without certification. This can be very misleading for parents. At the Margot Prior Wing we are working towards a Group certification. This will ensure that all activities within the centre are certified within ESDM.

How does it differ from forms of early intervention?

I believe that ESDM differs from other forms of early intervention in three important ways. First, ESDM differs philosophically from ABA-DT programs though they are both empirically based approaches. The ESDM is child-directed, naturalistic, play-based and developmental. The ESDM uses good teaching practices that are derived from ABA methodologies but that is the only way that they are similar. Second, there are other models that are philosophically more like the ESDM (E.g., Floortime – DIR, RDI, SCERTS) in some way, either they use a developmental approach or are

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“...once you work in ESDM and you see children making progress it is very encouraging”

A quiet word with Cynthia *continued...*

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relationship based but they haven't been studied rigorously with a randomized control trial. They may have done small group studies but are still waiting to conduct or publish randomised control trials. Finally, I often hear from early intervention providers that their “**eclectic**” services are like ESDM. I think it is possible that many intervention services are based on a selection of activities from other models and use good clinical and developmental practice which have worked well but have not been subjected to scientific enquiry. This research is needed to show that they are truly effective.

Can ESDM be used with children who do not have autism?

It hasn't been studied in other populations. Because we use scientific evidence to guide our practices, we do not recommend it for other groups. It would make sense to study it in other populations. ESDM focuses on all areas of development so it might be effective for young children with other developmental delays, it needs to be studied.

How does ESDM help parents?

A key component of the ESDM is to build a relationship with the parent, provide them with education and training them in the philosophy and techniques of the model. As the ESDM has been developed for very young children with autism, parents in the ESDM can learn to understand **their child's developmental progress**

and advocate for their child going forward.

How have staff at the MPW adapted their approach to early intervention since training in ESDM?

All of the MPW staff have significant expertise in working with children and with children with autism, but all of them have had to learn to use the ESDM. There is a lot of variability in their background and the application of ESDM to a group in a child care setting is new **and so it's been a different journey** for each of them. Anyone who has been through the certification process would say that they haven't been through anything like that before. However, once you work in ESDM and you see children making progress it is very encouraging. It is so motivating! In the group environment, one comment I hear a lot is that the children seem to be more calm and regulated. This is not to say we don't have behavioural challenges - it wouldn't be a group care environment without them - but because so much of what we do is guided by the children's areas of interest and our goals are to have positive interactions, the children appear more engaged and settled.

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What are the latest developments at the MPW?

The newest development is our focus on group certification. I am spearheading this effort. The MPW is really evolving into a research and “laboratory school” environment. There is more interest in separate research projects with the children in the centre. That's very exciting.

What are the short and long term hopes for the future of children undertaking ESDM currently?

Our short-term goal is to ensure a rapid rate of progress in the children. Every child is different with different skills. What's wonderful about working with very young children is there is no rule to predict how they will grow and learn. There is no tool that can tell us what to expect from a young child with autism. So that means that anything is possible. I saw that in the treatment study at the MIND Institute. Many children had amazing outcomes and went into mainstream school settings, after a year or two in the project.

Short-term is to have them grow to their best potential with intensive intervention and support. That sets them up for better long-term outcomes. Our long-term hope for the MPW is that the federal government will feel that this is a worthwhile use of funding for autism, and therefore provide more services with ESDM in Australia. Through research at OTARC we are all interested in seeing ESDM available to the broader Victorian community.

You're at the Margot Prior Wing for a fixed term. When you go back to the States what will happen to your position?

Even though I've only recently started at the centre I'm already in the process of evaluating and making recommendations for ongoing management and training support. The centre will always need a person in this position, someone who can train staff and can work collaboratively with research efforts as well as with the children at the centre. ■

What's wonderful about working with very young children is there is no rule to predict how they will grow and learn.



We are always looking for participants to take part in our research. Go to the OTARC website and see if you can help with any of our current studies.

We thought we'd share with you a sample of the questions we receive to our 'Ask a Researcher' Service at OTARC. In every issue we will bring you a recent question and the response supplied by one of our team of researchers.

Have studies been done on the effect of diet change for children with ASD?

Informing community based professionals about autism is an important part of our role in helping promote awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorders, particularly the benefits of early detection and diagnosis.

Complementary and alternative treatments such as the gluten and casein-free diet (GFCF), while not recommended in national and international guidelines on autism intervention, are extremely popular among families of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), with a reported use between 52% and 95%. Casein is a protein found in dairy products, and gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye, and some other grain products; therefore, individuals on a GFCF diet cannot eat common foods such as bread, milk, cheese, or ice cream, and the GFCF diet involves challenges such as increased preparation time, increased food-related expenses, and children refusing to eat the dietary selections.

The GFCF diet has been promoted as a treatment for the core symptoms of autism as well as the gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms that might be present in children with ASDs. The unproven rationale for this treatment is that GI and behavioural symptoms of autism originate from an impaired ability to break down dietary proteins present in gluten and casein, which would result in the formation of chemicals that cross the intestinal membranes, enter the bloodstream, and damage the brain.

This hypothesis was recently tested in a number of rigorous studies, all failing to show that children with **ASDs have "leaky guts"**.

While anecdotal reports have reported improvement in ASD symptoms with the GFCF diet, controlled studies have been limited. Based on preliminary findings, available research data do not support the use of GFCF diet as an effective treatment for individuals with ASDs. No research study, so far, addressed the crucial issue of potential harm of GFCF diets. However, researchers agree that dietary intervention might alleviate gastrointestinal distress in a subgroup of children with ASDs who are affected by GI problems.

Currently, we don't know how many children with ASDs show concurrent GI symptoms. While the existence of a gastrointestinal disturbance specific to persons with ASDs (e.g., "autistic enterocolitis") has not been established, many children with ASDs, just like children without ASD, might suffer from gastrointestinal symptoms. Since children with autism are impaired in their ability to communicate their discomfort, pain associated to GI symptoms might increase the likelihood that serious

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The OTARC now has an operating Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) link on our website. It can be accessed through the [‘Ask a Researcher’](#) page.

Staff and students answer questions regarding research and other aspects of Autism Spectrum Disorders.

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problem behaviours such as aggressiveness or self-injurious behaviour might occur. Therefore, addressing the GI symptoms might result in significant behavioural changes (e.g., reducing challenging behaviours).

In conclusion, there is not enough evidence to support special "autism diets" that eliminate casein and gluten, and additional data are needed before paediatricians and other professionals can recommend specific dietary modifications. Three large scale controlled studies are currently underway (NCT00090428, NCT01116388, and NCT00614198; <http://www.clinicaltrials.gov>).

When children with ASDs present with GI symptoms, a thorough evaluation should be conducted (as would be undertaken for individuals without ASDs who have the same symptoms). This subgroup of children might benefit from appropriate dietary intervention. However, given the real hardships associated with implementation of a strict GFCF diet, additional studies are needed to assess risk factors and possible markers that identify individuals who might benefit from these diets. Families must consider

the implications of further dietary restriction in a child who may already have a limited food repertoire. Because bone loss has been reported in children on the GFCF diet, consultation with a registered dietician is recommended before foods are eliminated from **the child's diet. Proper nutrition is as important for people with ASDs as it is for anyone else.**

Giacomo Vivanti, PhD

References

- Buie T, et al. (2010). Evaluation, Diagnosis, and Treatment of Gastrointestinal Disorders in Individuals with ASDs: A Consensus Report," Pediatrics. 125(1) , pp. S1–S18*
- Akins R., Angkustsiri K., Hansen R.L. (2010). Complementary and alternative medicine in autism: an evidence-based approach to negotiating safe and efficacious interventions with families. Neurotherapeutics. 7(3), pp. 307-319.*



Check out **WHO's WHO @ OTARC** in 2011 with a PDF available from [our website.](#)

(1063 KB)





Early Diagnostic Clinic for Autism Spectrum Disorders

The Early Diagnostic Clinic at La Trobe University specialises in early assessment for Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) in children up to 36 months. We welcome referrals from community-based early childhood and health professionals throughout Victoria. We are committed to early identification and diagnosis of ASDs so that children and their families may have access to the earliest possible support to promote positive developmental outcomes.

The Early Diagnostic Clinic benefits from a hub of expertise and leadership in ASDs by being associated with the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre and the Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre, also located at La Trobe University.

Each child will receive a comprehensive assessment conducted by two members of a team of professionals, including a Psychologist and a Speech Pathologist with expertise in early diagnostic assessments of ASDs.

The family will be provided with a confidential report and detailed feedback as well as a referral to a specialist Paediatrician for a follow-up consultation or to another specialist, if necessary.

Making an appointment

The Clinic is open for assessments on Thursdays. Families will need to come to the Clinic for two half-day sessions.

For enquiries and to make an appointment please ring the Early Diagnostic Clinic on 0459 163 171. If the telephone is unattended a message can be left by SMS or by email to edc@latrobe.edu.au. Our intake worker will respond as soon as possible.

Fees

The Early Diagnostic Clinic charges families a flat fee of \$200.00. These fees are not refundable through Medicare. The cost of providing this diagnostic service is normally \$1200 per child. We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the R. E. Ross Trust who are contributing \$1,000 per child.

Where to find the Clinic

The Early Diagnostic Clinic is located in the George Singer Building on the Melbourne campus of La Trobe University at Bundoora, which is serviced by trains, buses and trams. There are also car parking facilities in the Visitors' Car Park for those travelling by car. Please enter the campus via the Central Control Gate (off Kingsbury Drive).



An initiative of



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Publications

Goldman, S. E., Richdale, A. L., Clemens, T., & Malow B. A. (2011). *Parental sleep concerns in autism spectrum disorders: Variations from childhood to adolescence*, Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders; DOI 10.1007/s10803-011-1270-5

Schreck, K. A., & Richdale, A. L. (2011). *Knowledge of childhood sleep: A possible variable in under or misdiagnosis of childhood sleep problems*. Journal of Sleep Research; DOI: 10.1111/j.1365-2869.2011.00922.x

Vivanti, G., Rogers, S.J. (in press). *Autism and Social Learning. Lifespan and Disability*.

Vivanti, G., McCormick, C., Young, G., Abucayan, F., Hatt, N., Nadig, A., Ozonoff, S., Rogers, S. (2011). *Intact and impaired mechanisms of action understanding in autism and typical development*. Developmental Psychology, 47 (3), 841-56.

Colombi, C., Vivanti, G., Rogers, S. (2011). *The Neuropsychology of imitation deficit in autism*. In Fein, D. (Ed) *The Neuropsychology of Autism*. Oxford University Press

Gliga, T., Elsabbagh, M., Hudry, K., Charman, T., Johnson, M. H., & the BASIS team (in press). *The use of social cues for word learning in toddlers on the broader autism phenotype*. Child Development.

Elsabbagh, M., Holmboe, K., Gliga, T., Mercure, E., Hudry, K., Charman, T., Baron-Cohen, S., Bolton, P., Johnson, M., & the BASIS Team (2011). *Social and attention factors during infancy and the later emergence of autism characteristics*. In O. Braddick, J. Atkinson, & G. Innocenti (Eds.), *Progress in Brain Research*, Vol. 189 (pp. 195-208). Burlington: Academic Press.

Kelly, R., Dissanayake, C., Hammond S.W., & Ihsen, E (2011) *The Relationship between Symbolic Play and Executive Function in Young Children*, Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 36 (2), 21-27.

2011 Seminar Series



Presented by Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre (OTARC)

Supported by ACER

[There are still two seminars left in this year's series.](#)

[Seminar 2—Thursday 25 August 2011— with Assoc Prof Cheryl Dissanayake 'Asperger's Disorder and Autistic Disorder: Similarities and differences and changing diagnostic systems'](#)

[Seminar 3—Thursday 20 October 2011— with Dr Giacomo Vivanti 'Social Learning in Autism Spectrum Disorders'](#)

Visitors to our Centre



On the 15th of April, Dr Joanne Arciuli presented her research to the team at OTARC. Dr Arciuli's research interests are language, learning, and literacy development in children with, and without, developmental disabilities. Her research is funded by organisations including the Australian Research Council and her work is published in high quality international journals. Dr Arciuli is currently collaborating with Dr David Trembath (OTARC) on several projects examining literacy development in children with ASD and strategies for promoting evidence based clinical practice.



On the 13th of May, **Dr Mari Lehtinen** from the University of Helsinki visited OTARC to meet with staff and to discuss her research into the development of **speech prosody in children with ASD**. **Dr Lehtinen's** research will provide new insights into this poorly understood aspect of development in children with ASD, and we look forward to the possibility of future collaborations.



Celebrating achievements



We are pleased to report that **Jessica Mifsud** (supervised by Cheryl Dissanayake) has passed her Doctor of

Clinical Psychology thesis entitled 'A comparative investigation of symbolic play competency in children with high-functioning autism'.



We are pleased to share the good news that **Amanda Newbigin's** Doctor of Clinical Psychology

thesis entitled "Self-perception, social understanding and social responsiveness in children with high functioning autism from the perspectives of 'self' and 'other'" has been passed with only minor revisions. Amanda was supervised by Cheryl Dissanayake.

IMFAR 2011—SanDiego USA

In May a large contingent from the OTARC team took the long flight across the Pacific to the International Meeting for Autism Research (IMFAR) in San Diego.



Staff and students from OTARC who attended the IMFAR dined with some of our interstate colleagues (Dr Natalie Silove from Sydney Children's Hospital; Prof Torbjorn Falkmer & Marita Falkmer from Curtin University) and international colleagues (Prof Sue Leekam and Sarah Carrington from the Wales Autism Research Center at Cardiff University; Prof Pat Howlin from College London). At a separate table were our state based colleagues (A/Prof Mark Stokes and A/Prof Jane McGillvray from Deakin University; Dr Janine Manjiviona, Private Melbourne based Practitioner).



Dr Chongying Wang, Assoc Prof Amanda Richdale, Dr Margaret Bauman and Dr Thomas Kemper at the 2011 IMFAR conference in San Diego, USA in May.

Posters:

Baker, E., Richdale, A., Short, M., & Gradisar, M. *Sleep Patterns in Adolescents with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder and Typically Developing Adolescents.*

Richdale, A., & Michaels, C. *Psychological Correlates of Sleep Problems in Children with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder*

Dissanayake, C., Newbigin, A., & Chandler, F. *Emotion understanding and empathic responsiveness in high-functioning children with an ASD.*

Hudry, K., Bedford, R., Chandler, S., Pasco, G., Gliga, T., Elsabbagh, M., de Klerk, C., Johnson, M., Charman, T., & the BASIS Team (2011). *Profiles of receptive and expressive vocabulary growth in toddlers at high risk for autism spectrum disorders.*

Barbaro, J. & Dissanayake—*Developmental Profiles of Infants and Toddlers with Autism Spectrum Disorders Prospectively Identified In a Community-Based Setting.*

Green, C., Dissanayake, C., Loesch, D.Z., *2D:4D Digit Ratio and Autism Severity in Boys.*

Presentations:

Goldman, S. E., McGrew, S. G., **Richdale, A. L.,** Clemens, T., & Malow, B. A. *Behavior and Sleep – Associations across childhood and adolescence in autism spectrum disorder.*

Assoc Prof Amanda Richdale also was Co-Chair Sleep Special Interest Group



Tell them all
about it!

March 2011.

Dr Giacomo Vivanti—*Imitation and Learning in Autism Spectrum Disorders*. Invited seminar, School of Psychological Science Research Colloquia.

Assoc Prof Amanda Richdale—*Sleep in Typically Developing Children and Children with Developmental Disorders or ASD*—PD with Staff at EPIC Centre

Dr David Trembath – ‘*Research Developments in ASD*’ – Videoconference workshop presented for the NSW Hunter New England Health and the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability, and Home Care Interagency Education Day.

April 2011

Assoc Prof Amanda Richdale **Dr Josephine Barbaro**—*Diagnosing Autism Spectrum Disorders from Infancy to Adulthood. Who’s involved, what to look for and the Assessment* - ACER Workshop Melbourne University.

Assoc Prof Cheryl Dissanayake—*Realising a dream: Establishing the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre*. Invited talk presented at the Infinity Leadership Program, La Trobe University.

Assoc Prof Cheryl Dissanayake—*Autism in infancy and toddlerhood: Finding the path to early identification*. Research Colloquium at Swinburne University, April 6

May 2011

Assoc Prof Cheryl Dissanayake: *Autism - Latest evidence, screening and how MCFHNS can make a difference*; Keynote at the Broadening Horizons Conference, Gold Coast.

June 2011

Assoc Prof Cheryl Dissanayake: *Research Findings in Autism*. Invited **talk to the Asperger’s Syndrome** Support Network, Melbourne.

Assoc Prof Cheryl Dissanayake: *Can we diagnose autism in infancy: Barriers and solutions?* Invited lecture at the Clinical Controversies Meeting, Sydney, June 18

Dr Josephine Barbaro - *The Importance of Early Detection of Autism Spectrum Disorders: The Role of the GP, Maternal and Child Health Nurse, Paediatrician and Allied Health Provider*. Monash Division of General Practice. Yarra Yarra Golf Club, East Bentleigh.





The AARC had its 5th meeting at La Trobe University on June 1 with our key agenda item being the finalization of the Constitution for the new Australasian Autism Society For Autism Research which will begin operation this year following an Inaugural meeting at the Asia Pacific Autism Conference in Perth. For all those researchers attending APAC, we hope you will attend this important event.

Proposal to establish a CRC on Living with Autism Spectrum Disorders

To date, six universities, a number of the state based autism peak bodies and industry partners have committed to being essential participants of the proposed *Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism Spectrum Disorders (Autism CRC)*. They include the University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology, Curtin University, the University of New South Wales, La Trobe University, and the University of Western Australia). Each has committed \$50,000-100,000 per annum over 10 years to the proposed CRC.

The Autism CRC bid team, which consists of representatives from each of these organisations, have developed collaborative partnerships with industry and end-user groups/ASD service providers to focus on the understanding, diagnosis and support of people with autism spectrum disorders. The shared vision of the proposed *CRC for Living with Autism Spectrum Disorders* is to enable earlier, more accurate and efficient diagnoses, and to find more effective and cost efficient ways of enabling children and adults with ASD to achieve valued life outcomes through an end-user driven, cooperative, public-private cooperative research centre.

National Autism Summit – Sydney April 1

Autism Awareness hosted a National Autism Summit in Sydney on April 1, with approximately 30 invited attendees from across Australia. The theme of the day was **'Simplify, Amplify, Unify'** with one of the key topics under discussion being to develop a representative National Autism Peak Body in Australia, and the best ways to achieve this. Senator Jan McLucas, Parliamentary Secretary for Disability and Carers attended at the end of the day. The day concluded with a cocktail party at a venue overlooking the Opera House as it turned blue in recognition of World Autism Awareness Day. It was announced at this event that Autism Awareness was being granted NGO membership to the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI). This is the only Australian autism related NGO to have this affiliation.

Josie's trip to Seoul



You can follow us on TWITTER & FACEBOOK For up-to-the-minute postings of the latest news from our centre you can follow our centre on TWITTER at *OlgaTennison (NB. no space) or become a Friend of OTARC on FACEBOOK (Facebook search: Olga Tennison).



Dr Josephine Barbaro was a successful applicant in the Australia-Korea Foundation ECR program in 2011. This program included a two week study trip to Korea. Here is Josie (standing, middle) with the team at the Sungnam Child and Adolescent Mental Health Centre where she gave her last workshop). The woman to her immediate right was one of her hosts, Associate Professor Heejeong Yoo, a child psychiatrist at Seoul National University Bundang Hospital.

Dr Barbaro's presentations while in Seoul

Dr Josephine Barbaro — Early identification of Autism in infants and toddlers: The Social Attention and Communication Study (SACS). Asian Medical Center. Seoul, South Korea.

Dr Josephine Barbaro — Identifying infants and toddlers 'at risk' of Autism: The Social Attention and Communication Study (SACS). Seoul National University Hospital. Bundang, South Korea.

Dr Josephine Barbaro — Early language and joint attention deficits in infants and toddlers with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Sogang University. Seoul, South Korea.

Dr Josephine Barbaro - Early identification and diagnosis of children with autism from 0 to 3 years of age in Australia. Gangnam Severance Hospital, Yonsei University. Seoul, South Korea.

Dr Josephine Barbaro - Identification and Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders in Infants and Toddlers: Results From an Australian Study. Sungnam City Child-Adolescent Mental Health Center,





ABOVE: This group of blue OTARC people and their families turned up at Federation Square, Melbourne on 2nd April 2011 to celebrate the Square turning blue for World Autism Awareness Day. They look too happy to be BLUE!!!

In the Media

Dr Giacomo Vivanti gave two interviews on SBS, on April 21 and on June 3, about autism diagnosis and treatment and our program at the Margot Prior Wing (ASELCC).

Grants & tenders

ASD Branch, FACHSIA—OTARC was a successful tender to fund the ASELCC Database

RE ROSS Trust—funding for the establishment of the Early Diagnostic Clinic for Young Children with ASD.



Oh Canada!

Our Admin officer, Lisbeth, was pleased to see these banners on her recent holiday in Canada.

Seeking participants

SPEECH PATHOLOGISTS

TEACHERS

PAEDIATRICIANS

SOCIAL WORKERS

GPs

EARLY INTERVENTION PROVIDERS

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS

OTHER SPECIALIST SERVICE PROVIDERS

PSYCHOLOGISTS

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

**Do you work with individuals/families with
AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS?**

We are keen to hear about the experiences of a range of different professionals working with individuals with ASDs and/or their families, particularly regarding the topic of language. Participants would be interviewed for around 30 minutes, at a convenient time and location, or by phone. To find out more please contact:

Dr Kristelle Hudry
Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre
La Trobe University
k.hudry@latrobe.edu.au
Phone: (03) 9479 5649





Sleep Quality and Psychological Well-Being in Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

What is the project about?

This project is about how sleep and behavioural difficulties in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder impact on mothers' sleep quality and psychological well-being.

Who can participate?

If you are a mother of a child with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, we would like you to participate in this research study.

What will I do?

You will be asked to complete several measures about your child's sleep, behaviour, and ASD symptoms and your own sleep and psychological well-being in mothers.

Participants will also be entered in a draw for the chance to win a \$50.00 Coles-Myer voucher.

How do I find out more?

Researcher: Parise Nichole Gentikoglou, Honours student, School of Psychological Science. pngentikoglou@students.latrobe.edu.au) or phone 0438 348 237.

Project Supervisor: Associate Professor Amanda Richdale (a.richdale@latrobe.edu.au, 9479 1742),

Principal Research Fellow, Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre



A study on tertiary education

University and TAFE life can be challenging and stressful for any student. The aim of this study is to understand the support needs of students with ASD who are enrolled in tertiary study.

Are you a student enrolled at a Victorian TAFE or university and have an Autism Spectrum Disorder (Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, or PDDNOS)?

We would love to hear from you if you do not mind sharing your experiences at university or TAFE!

Are you a family member of a tertiary student with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, or PDDNOS)?

We would love to hear from you if you do not mind sharing your thoughts on the educational needs of your family member who is a tertiary student with ASD!

If you are interested in participating or have any questions please contact:

Ru Ying Cai
(03) 9479 3271 or 0402 437 928

r.cai@latrobe.edu.au

Amanda Richdale (Wed – Fri)
(03) 9479 1956

a.richdale@latrobe.edu.au

Seeking participants

seeking participants



Olga Tennison
AUTISM RESEARCH CENTRE
A U S T R A L I A



LA TROBE
UNIVERSITY

Does your child have Autism Spectrum Disorder and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder?

Is your child aged 7 to 12 years?

Are you and your child interested in participating
in a research study?

As part of my
postgraduate psychology
degree, I am
investigating social
attention abilities in
children with an Autism
Spectrum Disorder and /
or Attention-Deficit
Hyperactivity Disorder. If
you are interested in
participating, please
contact Claire Forsyth at
the La Trobe University
Child Development Unit.



Telephone: (03) 9479 2151.

Email: cl2forsyth@students.latrobe.edu.au

As a thank you for participating, you and your family will go into
a draw to win a family movie pass valued at \$60.



seeking participants

Growth in Boys with Autism

This study is examining overall growth in boys with autism, its relationship to hormone levels, bone and ligament development, and degree and form of autistic behaviours. This growth data will be used to identify possible subgroups within the autism spectrum.



We require

Boys 4-16 years of age
Typically Developing, or
Autism Spectrum Disorder
(Autistic Disorder/Autism, High-
Functioning Autism, Asperger's
Disorder, ASD, PDD-NOS)

What's Involved:

Growth Measurements
Behavioural Assessment (ASD only)*
Cognitive Assessment (ASD only)*
Hormonal Measures (ASD only)

*Parents of children with ASD will
receive a free written report of the
behavioural and cognitive
assessments

For more information, contact:
Cherie Green, PhD Candidate
c.green@latrobe.edu.au or
Ph. 9479 3271

Participants are needed for our research projects. If you, or a family member, wishes to participate in research please email the Centre at otarc@latrobe.edu.au or phone 9479 2497. Many research projects need typically developing children as well as children with an Autism Spectrum Disorders.



Phone: 61 3 9479 2497
Fax: 61 3 9479 1956
Email: otarc@latrobe.edu.au
Web: www.latrobe.edu.au/otarc

WHERE TO FIND US

The Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre is situated in a purpose-built child-friendly research facility in the School of Psychological Science (George Singer Building).
Bundoora Campus
La Trobe University



For Your Information

Page 20 contains events, requests and opportunities from organisations other than The Olga Tennison Research Centre.

We publish these items as a service to our readers.

To find out more about any item on these pages please go directly to the organisation that posted the notice.



Northern ASD Network

presents

Sleep and autism: What are the issues, what can be done?

Presented by Associate Professor Amanda Richdale from the
Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre.

A.Prof. Richdale will discuss sleep problems which often occur with children on the Autism Spectrum.

This training is suitable for Parents and staff working in PreSchool, Child Care, Family Day Care, Occasional Care, Early Childhood Intervention and Maternal & Child Health.



Venue: EPIC Centre - RMIT
Building 217
McKimmies Rd, Bundoora

Melway: 10 A7

Date: Thursday 21st July 2011

Time: 7.00pm to 9.00pm

Cost: \$20

Bookings: Jenny Orso (Mon- Thurs 8.30am - 3.30pm during school terms)

Ph: 9435 8311

Cheques payable to: 'Kalparrin N-ASD Network'

Direct Debit available ABN: 61 827 714 605

Invoice/Receipt available upon request.

Payment requested at time of booking