



UCSF Autism and Neurodevelopment Program Newsletter

Langley Porter
Hospital & Clinics

Fall 2010

Dear ANP families,

Spring is nearly here and we continue to move forward with our research, publications, and most importantly, clinical care. We hope this newsletter finds you well and look forward to hearing from you if you are interested in research, clinical assessments, or just want to check in and say hello!

All the Best,
Dr. Marco, Dr. Siegel, Dr. Ihle, Dr. Hendren, & Dr. Weiss

Upcoming Presentations

Autistic Learning Disabilities & Autistic Learning Styles: A Working Model for Developing Individualized Treatment Plans (Marin Autism Lecture Series, March 18, 2009). To be presented by Dr. Bryna Siegel at 12pm. Visit <http://signup.marinschools.org> to sign up and learn more!

Translating Knowledge From Developmental Research to Define Evidenced-Based Treatment for Autism & Disorders of Neurodevelopment (SRCD, April 2009). A roundtable discussion with child development professionals, led by Dr. Siegel at the Society for Research on Child Development's annual meeting in Chicago, IL.

Differential or Co-Morbid Diagnosis? Asperger's Disorder and PTSD in a Pre-schooler (IMFAR, May 2009). To date, there exist few empirical or anecdotal studies of individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) presenting with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The specific deficits associated with ASD may make this population especially susceptible to traumatic experiences and the dearth of literature about co-morbid diagnoses results in a lack of professional knowledge about how to recognize, diagnose and treat PTSD in autistic individuals. We present a case of co-morbid ASD and PTSD in a 4 year old male. The goal of this case study is to add to the literature about PTSD diagnoses in the ASD population, consider overlapping behaviors in differential diagnoses, and invite discussion about how best to diagnose and treat similar cases moving forward.

Development and Validation of the Autistic Learning Disabilities Inventory (ALD-I): Operationalizing Autistic Symptomatology for Individualizing Treatment (IMFAR, May 2009). Presently, documentation of a child's deficits in social, communication and play skills is necessary to inform a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The broad range of qualities exhibited by children with ASD make for a heterogeneous group for whom "standard" interventions are not always universally effective. In this poster, we present initial data supporting the validity of an instrument that identifies children's primary learning deficits regardless of specific ASD diagnosis. The tool will be useful to professionals for the purpose of diagnostic assessment, designing intervention strategies, and conceptualizing the child's strengths and weaknesses as a learner.

Clinical Corner:

For the last 20 years, the Autism Clinic at the Children's Center at Langley Porter (CCLP), UCSF has served families and children affected by autistic spectrum disorders—autism, PDD and Asperger's syndrome. The Clinic was established at Stanford in 1983 and moved to UCSF in 1989. It is one of the largest and most active autism specialty clinics in the United States.

Since 2006, the Autism Clinic has joined with UCSF Pediatric Neurology and UCSF Genetics to form the Autism and Neurodevelopment Clinic, offering neurology and genetics assessment to Autism Clinic families needing these services.

It's a boy!

Congratulations to Dr. Elysa Marco, who gave birth to her second child, Viggo James on January 20, 2009. We wish her and her family well and look forward to having her back on campus in April!

Get Involved!

We are currently enrolling participants for multiple research studies. Please keep in mind that for every study we are also recruiting healthy controls, so feel free to share this newsletter with friends and family!

If your family is interested, please contact our clinic coordinator:

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Autism touch and sound study:

This study assesses basic touch and sound processing. It includes diagnosis, IQ testing and non-invasive brain imaging procedures (MEG and MRI). Boys, aged 9 to 11 years, with autism can participate. We are also recruiting typically developing controls.

Sensory processing and integration study:

This study will assess sound and sight integration. It includes diagnosis, IQ testing, and non-invasive brain imaging procedures. Boys, aged 9 to 11 years, with sensory processing disorders (but not autism) are invited to participate. We are also recruiting typically developing controls.

Semantics (meaning of words and concepts) study:

The goal of this study is to obtain a better understanding of verbal and non-verbal semantics in individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders and to explore the relationship between brain structure and semantic abilities. We are recruiting boys, ages 9 – 13, with an autism spectrum disorder to participate in verbal and non-verbal neuropsychological testing as well as non-invasive brain imaging (MRI). We are also recruiting typically developing controls.

Tips of the Trade:

The following is an excerpt from Dr. Siegel's latest book:

Play as Language Practice

Play is the way children practice language. As children play, they repeat words and phrases they've heard in the scenarios they reenact. This reinforces the meaning of words. This can be something as simple as making backing-up "beeps" while rolling a truck backward to more complex scenes wherein one doll who has bitten another is told "I don't like to see inappropriate behavior." Parents of children with autism spectrum disorders can be too sensitized to hearing their children use whole phrases like, "I don't like to see inappropriate behavior," worrying the child is being echolalic and that the echolalia is all bad. Echolalia is not all bad, and in fact, echolalia is an expected strategy in early language development as children move from one- and two-word phrases to larger, more complex statements. What we would call *functional delayed echolalia* in a child with autism is, more importantly, a sign that the child is trying to use a strong auditory memory to power through a sentence's meaning when she can't readily recall meaning from more nuanced vocabulary or grammar.

If you would prefer not to receive this newsletter in the future, OR if you would prefer to receive the newsletter via email, please contact Anne Bernard at the number below or at Anne.Bernard@ucsf.edu.