



Updates



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Early Diagnosis of Autism

by Mary Zaremba

Autism continues to gain attention in the media. Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) is now known to be the fastest growing developmental disorder in the U.S. with an incidence rate estimated to be at 1 in 150 children. That means that this year in the U.S., more children could be diagnosed with autism than AIDS, cancer, and diabetes combined.

In July 2007, the results of a study on the early detection of autism by researchers from the Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore, Maryland was published in the Archives of General Psychiatry. The results were notable enough to earn a spot on NBC's Today Show.

The study focused on evaluating the social and communication development in young children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) from 14–16 months of age. The research, led by Dr. Rebecca Landa, Director of the Kennedy Krieger Center for Autism Related Disorders, looked closely at the social and communication development of young children identified at either high or low risk for ASD at ages 14–36 months. Through ongoing observation and standardized testing, researchers noted, “disruptions in social, communication, and play development that were indicative of ASD in 14 month olds.”



In this group of 87 infants at high risk for ASD, researchers found that 50% of the

children who had a final diagnosis of ASD were at the 30 or 36 month range.

The study goes on to state that the “wait and see” method often recommended to parents of very young children with early signs of difficulties could lead to loss of valuable intervention time. Dr. Landa claimed that “the fact that we

“This year more children could be diagnosed with autism than AIDS, cancer, and diabetes combined.”

can identify this at such an early age is extremely exciting, because it gives us an opportunity to diagnose children with ASD very early when intervention may have a great impact on development.”

Dr. Landa and colleagues identified the following signs of developmental “disruptions” or red flags for which parents, child care providers, and pediatricians should look for:

- Problems in initiating communication with others;
- Compromised ability to initiate and respond to opportunities to share experiences with others;
- Unusual play behaviors; and
- Significantly reduced variety of sounds, words, and gestures used to communicate.

For more information about this study and the Kennedy Krieger Institute go to:

www.kennedykrieger.org

The Autism Programs at the Center for Development & Disability

by Mary Zaremba

In October 2006, Governor Richardson announced a plan to provide “major investment in helping children with disabilities.” One area of new funding in the Governor’s budget request was for autism training and parent support. This influx of additional funds has resulted in a substantial increase in resources for professionals and family members. The UNM Center for Development and Disability offers a menu of options through The Autism Programs.

One statewide program of note is the Parent Home Training Program for Autism Spectrum Disorder designed to assist parents of a child under five years with autism. The program offers individualized services based on the child’s learning style, developmental strengths and needs, and culture of the family. The program is intended to help families learn specific motivational and teaching strategies found to be effective for children with autism, and to guide them in using these techniques with their child.

To access more information on the variety of other services offered under the umbrella of The Autism Programs, such as clinical services, which provide:

- diagnosis and assessment of ASD
- research
- parent networking
- training
- consultation
- contractual services with NM public schools and others

For information, contact: <http://cdd.unm.edu/autism>, 1-800-270-1861 or locally (505) 272-1852.

More Resources:

The NM Autism Society <http://nmautismsociety.org>, (505) 332-0306

CDD Library and Information Network for the Community (LINC) <http://cdd.unm.edu/linc>, 1-800-827-6380



Highlights from the New Mexico Interdisciplinary Early Care and Intervention Conference

The 3rd New Mexico Interdisciplinary Early Care and Intervention Conference took place in Albuquerque on October 27, 2007 with a special pre-conference for program managers on October 26th. The featured presenter was Mary Claire Heffron, who also conducted the full day pre-conference, Using Reflective Supervision as a Vehicle to Family Connection and Program Quality. Please see attendees’ feedback below:

Thank you for this opportunity...I was most definitely blown away by Ms. Mary Claire--what an inspiration!! I went to the conference not expecting to hear anything new and most definitely nothing inspiring because I am already “sold,” a convert if you will, so I have to say I was caught off guard by the impact of Mary’s words. When she was describing how what we do now for children and families can and DOES affect them for the rest of their lives. Also, when we work with families, if we utilize reflective practice with them, it makes our relationships with them better, thus making the relationships they have with others better, and so on. Well, it simply recharged me to go out and keep on doing what I am doing, and do it with reinvigoration that I have missed for awhile. I told someone next to me at the table that it felt like being at church, when you see people being uplifted by

E-Learning

AUTISM WEB RESOURCES

The following resource for this month’s e-learning was reviewed by Patricia Rodriguez and Sandy Heimerl, both with the CDD Early Childhood Evaluation Program (ECEP). A new website, created by families for families, provides information in Spanish about autism spectrum disorders. In addition to this website, a chat room and public forum area currently are under development. *Manitas por Autismo* (a little hand for autism) can be found at: <http://www.manitasporautismo.com/>

The following is a link to a recently published article, *Meeting the Early Childhood Diagnostic Needs in Rural New Mexico*, by Brian Lopez, PhD, and Marcia Moriarta, PsyD, both with the Center for Development and Disability. Their article is in the newsletter, *Autism and Related Developmental Disabilities*, in a special section on underserved populations. You can find their article on page 6 of this newsletter, along with other information about this topic. <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~joshmil/>

Also a new study maps brain abnormalities in autistic children. Autistic children have more gray matter in areas of the brain that control social processing and sight-based learning than children without autism. Read about this study at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSN2754212320071128>

Developmental Problems of Maltreated Children and Early Intervention Options: Literature Review

by Mary Zaremba

Part 1

An integrated literature review of the developmental problems identified in maltreated children, as well as options for intervention was completed by a team of authors; Crystal Wiggins, Emily Fenichel, and Tammy Mann, from Zero to Three, and submitted to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, April 23, 2007. The goal of the paper was to describe the most prevalent problems experienced by maltreated infants and toddlers and benefits of early intervention for these children. As a result, the child welfare personnel and policymakers involved in the assessing and advocating for these maltreated children would be more informed about their needs.

The following is a mere slice of all the information found in the 27 page paper. Part 1 lists key findings from a wide review of literature related to the identification of developmental problems found in children under three who have been maltreated. The first section of the paper, Health, Growth, Motor Delays, and Compromised Physiological Systems cited the following in maltreated children:

- acute and chronic health problems (22% – 80%)
- failure to thrive (11%)
- overall growth delays (20%)
- gross and fine motor delays (4 – 47%)



Please note: wide ranges in incidence rates are a result of different methodologies used to determine extent of delays. Interestingly, information from studies note that medical problems and growth delays are not only a result of, but also risks for maltreatment.

A variety of cognitive, social, emotional (including attachment relationships) and communication problems are summarized in the report. Some of these include:

- cognitive delays (23% – 65%)
- speech and language delays (14% – 64%)
- poor emotional comprehension
- increased expression of negative emotion

In addition to the aforementioned developmental areas, the paper summarizes actual “diagnosable mental health difficulties” identified in maltreated infants and toddlers:

- Demonstration of externalizing problems such as aggression and oppositional behaviors (14 – 37%)
- Regulatory Disorders (22%)

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (7%)
- Internalizing problems such as: depression, anxiety, somatic complaints (11%)

While a certain percentage of maltreated children demonstrate “poor developmental outcomes,” what about the others? Some maltreated children seem to show “academic, emotional, and behavioral resiliency” depending upon the protective factors in their lives. However, research indicates that there are other factors that weigh heavily on a child’s ability to thrive, regardless of the number of protective factors around them. Those other factors are; “low cognitive stimulation, poor parental education, parental psychopathology, low socio-economic status (SES), poor nutrition, insufficient healthcare, and pre-existing disabilities.”



Highlights - Continued from Page 2

the “word” and being moved to shout...Hallelujah! I was compelled to shout out...“Say it again, sister!” Thank you for the opportunity to be inspired.

Regina Huffman
EC Coordinator
DSI/ELFS, Gallup

I attended the session entitled “Developing Family Friendly Interventions for Children with ASD from Birth to Five Years.” I found the information in this session very useful to my practice as a speech-therapist working in early intervention. The various presenters offered a number of accessible and applicable ideas, using video clips to encourage participant observation and discussion. They clearly explained the various components of active engagement, emphasizing the importance of self-regulation to all other forms of engagement. They also outlined interventions that support engagement, using video clips to further illustrate their ideas and suggestions. The combination of an SLP, OT, and parent proved very effective in communicating different aspects of intervention. I particularly appreciated hearing the parent’s point of view, especially where this concerned teaching families to engage with their autistic child. Their parting words, “please don’t think we don’t want to engage,” brought home the important message that children with autism DO want to engage, and that it is our responsibility to teach them how to do so.

Gia Scarletta
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CDD Library Information Network for the Community (LINC)

1-800-827-6380 or 272-0281

Visit the Early Childhood & Specialized Personnel Development Division website at <http://cdd.unm.edu/ecspd/>



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SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

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Early Intervention Workshops

Please Post!

January 2008

January 18

Service Coordination 1: Family Centered
Albuquerque
Sbicca Brodeur – Sbicca.brodeur@state.nm.us

January 25

90-Day Transition Conference
Albuquerque
Dawn Giegerich – dgiegerich@salud.unm.edu

January 30

Service Coordination 2: From Intake to Eligibility
Albuquerque
Sbicca Brodeur – Sbicca.brodeur@state.nm.us

January 31

Service Coordination 3: The IFSP Process
Albuquerque
Sbicca Brodeur – Sbicca.brodeur@state.nm.us

February 2008

February 13

Family Visiting: A Relation-based Approach to Early Intervention
Las Cruces
Debra Billings – dbillings@salud.unm.edu

February 15

90-Day Transition Conference
Ruidoso
Dawn Giegerich – dgiegerich@salud.unm.edu

February 22

Service Coordination 4: Facilitating Smooth & Effective Transition
Albuquerque
Sbicca Brodeur – Sbicca.brodeur@state.nm.us

February 28

The Developmental Evaluation: An Ebb & Flow Process
Gallup
Julie Bachechi – jbachechi@salud.unm.edu

March 2008

March 7

90-Day Transition Conference
Taos
Dawn Giegerich – dgiegerich@salud.unm.edu

March 13

Service Coordination 1: Family Centered
Santa Fe
Suzanne Pope – supope@msn.com

March 27

Service Coordination 2: From Intake to Eligibility
Santa Fe
Suzanne Pope – supope@msn.com

March 28

Service Coordination 3: The IFSP Process
Santa Fe
Suzanne Pope – supope@msn.com

SERVICE COORDINATION modules are required for all new service coordinators working in early intervention programs.

It is highly recommended that these modules be taken in order, if at all possible.

Please make reservations for all workshops.

Over for More Trainings



Early Intervention Workshops

April 2008

April 10

Service Coordination 4: Facilitating Smooth & Effective Transition

Santa Fe

Suzanne Pope – supope@msn.com

April 17

It's Only Natural!: Supports and Services in Everyday Routine, Activities, Places

Gallup

Mary Zaremba – mzaremba@salud.unm.edu

May 2008

May 8

Developing the Dream: The Individualized Family Service Plan

Santa Fe

Mary Zaremba – mzaremba@salud.unm.edu

May 16

Service Coordination 1: Family Centered Grants

Sbicca Brodeur – Sbicca.brodeur@state.nm.us

May 22

The Developmental Evaluation: An Ebb & Flow Process

Albuquerque

Julie Bachechi – jbachechi@salud.unm.edu

June 2008

June 5

Service Coordination 2: From Intake to Eligibility Grants

Sbicca Brodeur – Sbicca.brodeur@state.nm.us

June 6

Service Coordination 3: The IFSP Process Grants

Sbicca Brodeur – Sbicca.brodeur@state.nm.us

June 27

Service Coordination 4: Facilitating Smooth & Effective Transition

Grants

Sbicca Brodeur – Sbicca.brodeur@state.nm.us

