

Annual Report 2014- 2015



Image: Bobby Kyriakoplous, Not titled 2014, gouache on paper, 38 x 56cm (Courtesy the artist and Arts Project Australia, Melbourne)

Contents

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Introduction | 3 |
| This year's highlights | 4 - 5 |
| Menzies Symposium | 4 |
| Second Biennial ASFA Conference | 4 |
| New Directions Eye tracking Forum | 4 |
| The Dandelion Project | 5 |
| Frame of Mind Exhibition | 5 |
| VESKI Victorian Fellowship in Life Sciences | 5 |
| Facts & Figures | 6 |
| Objective 1 — Facilitate large and / or ongoing projects | 7 - 18 |
| Research Themes and Studies | 7 - 11 |
| Publications | 12 - 13 |
| Conference presentations | 14 - 16 |
| Research Grants | 17 |
| OTARC Meetings | 18 |
| Objective 2 — Facilitate collaboration with other research centres both nationally and internationally | 19 - 23 |
| Collaborations & Partnerships | 19 - 20 |
| Visitors to our Centre | 21 - 22 |
| OTARC Folk Out & About | 23 |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Objective 3 — Foster and support a National Research Network | 24 |
| Cooperative Research Centre for Living | 24 |
| The Australasian Society for Autism Research | 24 |
| Objective 4 — Conduct campaigns to improve the public profile of autism research, thereby attracting additional research funds via grants and donations. | 25 - 28 |
| Media Activities | 25 - 26 |
| Talking ASD Research online | 26 |
| Ask an Autism Researcher Service | 26 |
| Newsletter BLOG | 26 |
| Donations | 27 |
| Volunteers | 28 |
| Objective 5 — Provide opportunities for student based research and early career mentoring programs | 29 - 30 |
| Current Research Students | 29 |
| 2014 — 2015 Postgraduate and Honours completions | 30 |
| Visiting Early Career Researchers and Postgraduate students | 30 |

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Objective 6 — Foster knowledge transfer to practitioners within the field | 31 - 32 |
| ADOS Training | 31 |
| Invited Talks and Workshops | 31 |
| Have Your Say Forum | 32 |
| World Autism Awareness Day 2015 | 32 |
| Other Initiatives | 32 - 35 |
| Appointments | 32 |
| The Early Diagnostic Clinic | 33 |
| The Margot Prior Wing | 33 |
| Raising Children Network | 34 |
| PlayConnect | 34 |
| Operations & Projects | 34 |
| Lab Report and Lab Meetings | 35 |
| Financial Report | 36 - 37 |
| Staffing and Centre Personnel | 38 |
| Governance | 39 |
| Our Principal Donor and Patron | 40 |

ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015

Introduction

Welcome to the seventh Annual Report of the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre!

You will read here about many new initiatives over the last year, with one of the most exciting being a collaboration with Hewlett Packard (HP) Australia, and the Danish company Specialisterne, to study and promote positive employment outcomes amongst adults with an ASD. The 'Dandelion Project' prepares these adults for job readiness, with HP employing them to undertake software testing within the Australian Department of Human Services. In addition to research, the Specialisterne Centre Australia has been embedded at La Trobe University, with its Australian trainers co-located at OTARC. Dr Darren Hedley has joined us as a Research Fellow on this exciting project. Thus our research program on adults with ASD, a much under-researched area, is slowly gathering speed, especially given the Autism CRC projects already underway at OTARC with Associate Professor Amanda Richdale and Dr Mirko Uljarević as principal researchers.

We had our first research retreat on Lake Eildon in September last year, which allowed us to reflect on our research programs and set our research priorities for the next five years. We discussed how best to undertake research that has the greatest impact on those living with an ASD.

A highlight in this last year has been the hosting of a number of research events at OTARC which brought together leading national and international ASD researchers. Amongst them were Professor Cathy Lord, Dr Andy Shih and Professor Sue Leekam. The events included the Menzies Symposium on Shaping Futures, the inaugural Autism CRC Scholars Event, the 2nd conference of the Australasian Society for Autism Research, and the Eye Tracking Workshop – all during December 2014!!

One of our ex PhD students, Dr Heather Nuske (currently an Autism CRC post-doctoral scholar with us) was awarded a competitive Veski Victoria Fellowship in the Life Sciences.

OTARC was also awarded one of the first National Disability Insurance Agency research grants to investigate the outcomes of very young children with ASD receiving early intervention within a mainstream early childhood setting. The results of this randomized control trial, led by Dr Giacomo Vivanti, and underway at the Victorian ASELCC, will inform the feasibility of delivery of an autism specific intervention for young children within an inclusive setting.

It's been another highly successful year realizing new research partnerships, programs and successful funding applications which continue to allow us to extend our reach. I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary team of staff, students and volunteers who have each contributed to our success, and also our Advisory Committee who have helped us steer a clear course during the past year.



*Professor Cheryl Dissanayake, PhD
MAPS
Director, Olga Tennison Autism Research
Centre*





Professors Lawrie Bartak and Margot Prior with the Chair and Co-Chair of the ASFAR Executive (Professors Katrina Williams and Cheryl Dissanayake)

2. Second Biennial Conference of the Australasian Society for Autism Research (ASfAR)

This conference, convened by Professor Cheryl Dissanayake, and held at La Trove University in December 2014, attracted 200 local and international delegates, with three high-profile international researchers presenting keynote addresses: Professor Cathy Lord (Director of the Center for Autism and the Developing Brain at Cornell and Columbia Universities), Dr Andy Shih (Vice President of Scientific Affairs of Autism Speaks) and Professor Sue Leekam (Chair of Autism and Director of the Wales Autism Research Centre). The conference was free to ASfAR members, and ACER and AMAZE kindly sponsored the lunches and the Autism CRC provided the two morning teas allowing us to keep costs down. A number of student volunteers helped us to make sure that the conference ran smoothly. We are very grateful for their assistance.

Most of the OTARC researchers and many of our students presented at the conference. Two Lifetime ASfAR Memberships were awarded to Professor Margot Prior and Professor Lawrie Bartak in recognition of their contribution to research and service in ASD.

The standard of presentations was very high, especially amongst the many students who presented their work. Ms Susan Wade (Monash University) received the inaugural Margot Prior Prize for Best Student Oral Presentation at the conference, and Mr Peter Donaldson (Deakin University) received the inaugural Lawrie Bartak Prize for Best Student Poster Presentation.



The forum speakers: Dr Giacomo Vivanti, Professor Sue Leekam, Dr Georgina Powell and Dr Heather Nuske.

3. New Direction in Eye Tracking Forum

The New Directions in Eye Tracking forum was co-hosted by OTARC and the Wales Autism Research Centre. It took place in December 2014 at La Trove University, and was attended by around 70 professionals, people with ASD and researchers. It featured Professor Sue Leekam and her Post Doctoral Fellow, Dr Georgina Powell, as well as one of our own research fellows – Dr Giacomo Vivanti and Dr Heather Nuske. Discussions centred on the use of eye-tracking technology for studies on attention and emotional reaction in children with ASD.



Dr Darren Hedley, Wojciech Nadachowski, Michael Fieldhouse (HP) and Thorkil Sonne (Specialisterne)

4. The Dandelion Project

The Dandelion Project represents a new partnership between OTARC, Hewlett Packard (HP) Australia, Danish company Specialisterne and the Australian Department of Human Services (DHS) to study and promote positive employment outcomes amongst adults with an ASD. It is led by new Research Fellow, Dr Darren Hedley. HP have engaged the Specialisterne, to adopt the Specialist People Foundation (SPF) model to recruit adults with an ASD which also trains and prepares them for job readiness. These adults are then employed by HP and placed within DHS to undertake software testing. As the research partner, OTARC has developed a program of research to understand the success factors as well as the ongoing social impact and employment benefits for people with ASD, their families, co-workers and employers. The findings will help shape optimal future work opportunities for people with ASD.

La Trobe and Specialisterne have also signed a Memorandum of Understanding to help establish the Specialisterne Centre Australia. Founder and Chairman of SPF, Mr Thorkil Sonne, and La Trobe University Vice Chancellor, Professor John Dewar are pictured below on the day of the MOU signing. The MOU will co-locate SPF's trainers with OTARC, giving the trainers access to latest research outcomes on successful work and transitions for adults with ASD.



Vice Chancellor Professor John Dewar and Specialist People Founder Thorkil Sonne sign Memorandum Of Understanding to co-locate Specialisterne Centre Australia at La Trobe University



Alise Hardy (right) with curator, Alexandra Aulich (on far left) in front of her work 'Maddalena' 2015.

5. Frame of Mind Exhibition: THE FIGURE AND BEYOND Writer's Block Café, La Trobe University - April-May 2015

OTARC partnered again with the La Trobe University Museum of Art (LUMA) to celebrate International Autism Awareness Day with their annual 'Frame of Mind' exhibition. This year's theme was 'The figure and beyond' and featured the work of seven emerging and established artists with an ASD from around Australia: George Aristovoulou, Zalie Copeland, Ray David, Alise Hardy, Bobby Kyriakopoulos, Anthony Romagnano, and Tim Sharp. The exhibition was curated by Alex Aulich, at OTARC, and was opened on April 2, 2015 by Stuart Purves AM, National Director of Australian Galleries.



Stuart Purvis opened the exhibition

OTARC would like to thank all of the exhibiting artists for allowing us to show their work. We would also like to thank LUMA and Arts Project Australia for their involvement and support of Frame of Mind 2015.



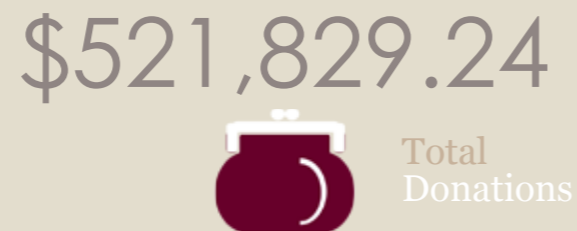
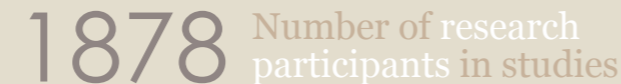
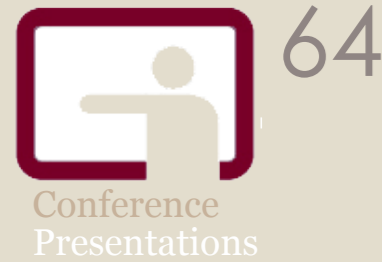
Zalie Copeland with 'In the garden' 2014 and 'The little mermaid' 2014



6. VESKI Victoria Fellowship in Life Sciences

Dr Heather Nuske was awarded a VESKI Victoria Fellowship in Life Sciences in 2014. This prestigious award recognizes and celebrates the outstanding contribution of Victoria's leading scientists and researchers in the fields of physical sciences and life sciences and enables them to undertake international study missions to broaden their experience and develop international networks. Heather visited the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development (CBCD) at Birkbeck College, University of London, where she was trained by Dr Emily Jones and Dr Teodora Gliga in methods for recording of heart rate, skin conductance response, and event-related potentials in young children.

Facts & Figures



Our Objectives and Achievements

Objective 1

Facilitate large and/or ongoing research projects

OTARC continues to undertake a range of research studies that cover the developmental period from infancy through to adolescence and adulthood, with a number of longitudinal investigations underway. Our 'Research Themes and Projects' are outlined here, including our research outputs, in the form of conference presentations and publications. These illustrate the breadth of our research program.

Research Theme 1: Identification and diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders: Early behavioural signs

Our work in Social Attention and Communication Surveillance (SACS) continues locally and overseas, with increased attention on how to scale this work to promote earlier identification and diagnosis in both high and low resource settings. Indeed, we have a new AusAid funded PhD scholar (Rena Shrestra) who plans to study the implementation of SACS in Nepal.

Current Studies

1. Developmental Surveillance for ASD (Autism CRC Project).

Researchers: Cheryl Dissanayake, Josephine Barbaro & the Core Project 1 Team

2. Social Attention and Communication Study-Revised (SACS-R).

Researchers: Josephine Barbaro, Lael Ridgway (School of Nursing and Midwifery, La Trobe University), Cheryl Dissanayake

3. Early identification of Autism Spectrum Disorders in Tianjin, China.

Researchers: Cheryl Dissanayake, Josephine Barbaro, Chongying Wang (Nankai University) & Gongshu Liu (Tianjin Women and Children's Health Centre)

4. Barriers and enablers to the early identification of Autism Spectrum Disorders in Australia.

Researchers: Cathy Bent, Cheryl Dissanayake & Josephine Barbaro

5. Reducing the age of diagnosis of ASD in Nepal: SACS-N.

Researchers: Rena Shrestra, Cheryl Dissanayake & Josephine Barbaro

6. Social attention and communication surveillance in Warsaw, Poland.

Researchers: Joanna Kwarsiborska-Dudek (Academy of Special Education, Warsaw), Przemyslaw Tomalski (Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw), Cheryl Dissanayake & Josephine Barbaro

7. Social attention and communication surveillance in Tanaka, Japan.

Researchers: Emiko Kesuka (Gunma Prefectural Women's University), Hiroshi Miyauchi (Takasaki University of Health and Welfare), Midori Okuno (Gunma Paz College), Cheryl Dissanayake & Josephine Barbaro

8. Social attention and communication symptoms in infants at familial high risk for autism.

Researchers: Kristelle Hudry, Josie Barbaro, Emily Jones (Birkbeck College, University of London) & Przemyslaw Tomalski (University of Warsaw, Poland)

9. Clinician confidence during screening for Autism Spectrum Disorder in toddlers.

Researchers: Darren Hedley, Neil Brewer (Flinders University), Rose Nevill (Ohio State University & Nisonger Center, Columbus Ohio), & Elizabeth Kryszak, Jonathan Wilkins, Eric Butter, James A Mulick (all Nationwide Children's Hospital and Ohio State University, Columbus Ohio)

10. Approach and withdrawal in toddlers with ASD and developmental delays: Unique behavioural profiles?

Researchers: Darren Hedley, Prof James A Mulick (Ohio State University) & Rose Nevill (Ohio State University & Nisonger Center, Columbus Ohio)

11. Developmental surveillance for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in early childhood education settings.

Researchers: Beth Mozolic-Staunton, Michelle Donelly, Josephine Barbaro, & Jacqui Yoxall (Southern Cross University)

12. Universal surveillance and early identification of developmental disorders.

Researchers: Valsamma Eapen (University of New South Wales), Katrina Williams (Royal Children's Hospital, Department of Developmental Medicine), Bin Jaludin (University of New South Wales), Cheryl Dissanayake & Sue Woolfenden (Sydney Children's Hospitals Network)

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Research Theme 2: Behavioural, motor and cognitive development

Our work here is marked by comparative studies of different populations of children (Fragile X Syndrome, Williams Syndrome) which help us to unravel both typical and autistic development. Our longitudinal studies illustrate the impact of early developmental processes on later behavioural and cognitive outcomes. This area also encompasses studies of emotional development (including temperament), social cognition, adaptive behaviour and motor abilities.

A recent and important finding in a longitudinal study of children diagnosed with an ASD at age 2-years by PhD candidate Megan Clark is the reduction in the percentage of children meeting criteria for an intellectual disability from toddlerhood to school age. Megan has found that only 9% of children with ASD have an IQ < 70 at school age (compared to 64% at 2-years of age and 40% at age 4).

Current Studies

- 1. The interplay between early motor deficits and later socio-communicative outcomes in children with ASD.**
Researchers: Darren Hocking, Josie Barbaro, Melanie Porter (Macquarie University), Deniz Ozbilgin, Jessica Hopwood (Macquarie University)
- 2. School-age outcomes of children with ASD who received ESDM.**
Researchers: Zoe Vinen, Cheryl Dissanayake & Giacomo Vivanti
- 3. School-age outcomes of children with an ASD diagnosed at age 2 years.**
Researchers: Megan Clark, Cheryl Dissanayake & Josephine Barbaro

4. Comparing longitudinal outcomes of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosed in toddlerhood via two different referral systems.

Researchers: Felicity Peel & Cheryl Dissanayake

5. Neurodevelopmental profiles of toddlers with ASD and developmental delay.

Researchers: Darren Hedley, Rose Nevill (Ohio State University & Nisonger Center, Columbus Ohio), & Jonathan Wilkins, Eric Butter, James A Mulick (all Nationwide Children's Hospital and Ohio State University, Columbus Ohio)

6. Wellbeing and emotional development in infants at high genetic risk for ASD.

Researchers: Katherine (Kat) Crea, Kristelle Hudry & Cheryl Dissanayake

7. Acoustic analysis of vocalisations of toddlers with ASD and developmental delay.

Researchers: Darren Hedley & Neil McLachlan (Music and Auditory Neuroscience Laboratory, University of Melbourne)

8. Verbal and non-verbal communication interaction in pretend play with children with autism.

Researchers: Susan Douglas (University of Melbourne), Lesley Stirling (University of Melbourne) & Cheryl Dissanayake

Research Theme 3: Biological markers of ASD: Genetic markers and hormonal influences

Data collection for the signature Autism CRC project, the Australian Autism Biobank, is underway. OTARC is one of four sites nationally collecting phenotypic and genotypic data from children aged between 2 and 17 years and their parents. In addition, we are also involved in studies modelling features of ASD in animals to better understand the genetic pathways involved in ASD.

Current Studies

- 1. Australian Autism Biobank (Autism CRC Project).**
Researchers: Andrew Whitehouse (Telethon Kids Institute, University of Western Australia), Cheryl Dissanayake, Valsamma Eapen (University of New South Wales) & Honey Heussler (University of Queensland)
- 2. Investigating the genetics of co-morbid anxiety and insomnia in Autism Spectrum Disorder.**
Researchers: Amanda Richdale, Greg Somers, Matthew Hale, John Lesku, Cheryl Dissanayake & Stephen Kent (La Trobe University, School of Psychological Science)
- 3. Serotonergic systems, anxiety and insomnia in a model of autism spectrum disorder.**
Researchers: Matthew Hale ((School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University), John Lesku (School of Life Sciences, La Trobe University), Amanda Richdale, Stephen Kent (School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University) & Cheryl Dissanayake

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4. Cortisol and Oxytocin in young children with ASD.

Researchers: Kitty Ying Wan, Stephen Kent (La Trobe University, School of Psychological Science) & Cheryl Dissanayake

5. The role of oxytocin in social cognitive deficits in young adults with autism, Williams syndrome and social anxiety disorder.

Researchers: Darren Hocking, Giacomo Vivanti, Melanie Porter (Macquarie University), Naomi Bishop (School of Life Sciences, La Trobe University), Teresa Iacano (La Trobe Rural Health School), Izelle Labuschagne (Australian Catholic University), Mark Williams (Macquarie University), Ron Rapee (Macquarie University), Quincy Wong (Macquarie University), Cheryl Dissanayake & Stephen Kent (School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University)

6. Prenatal and early postnatal risk factors in ASD.

Researchers: Andrew Whitehouse (Telethon Kids Institute, University of Western Australia), Murray Maybery (University of Western Australia), Cheryl Dissanayake, Martha Hickey (Royal Women's Hospital, University of Melbourne) & Craig Pennell (University of Western Australia)

7. Methylation markers for early diagnosis and treatment of Fragile X Syndrome and related conditions.

Researchers: David Godler (Murdoch Children Research Institute), Howard Slater (Murdoch Children Research Institute), David Amor (Murdoch Children Research Institute), Cheryl Dissanayake, Lesley Bretherton, Nusrat Ahmed & Minh Bui (University of Melbourne)

Research Theme 4: Focus on families

The importance of investigations on families who support their offspring with ASD cannot be underestimated. Understanding families' experience of ASD provides important information regarding how best to support affected families. CRC PhD scholar Stacey Rabba has developed a Family Support Package to assist families soon after diagnosis of their child with ASD, and is currently undertaking a randomized control trial (RCT) to establish the efficacy of the package in improving family wellbeing.

Current Studies

- 1. Development and evaluation of a Family Support Program for newly diagnosed children with an ASD.**
Researchers: Stacey Rabba, Cheryl Dissanayake & Josephine Barbaro
- 2. Comparing family wellbeing in families whose children were diagnosed in toddlerhood via two different referral systems.**
Researchers: Deniz Obligin, & Cheryl Dissanayake
- 3. Evaluating Australian community-based support for families with young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.**
Researchers: Kristelle Hudry, Cheryl Dissanayake, Peter Sivey (La Trobe University, School of Economics), Wojciech Nadachowski, Giacomo Vivanti, Megan Grant, Ru Ying Cai & Jackie Maya
- 4. An exploratory study of the impact of autism symptoms on parenting.**
Researchers: Natasha Kolivas, Lindsay Pamment, Amanda Richdale & Cheryl Dissanayake

Research Theme 5: Learning and teaching: Understanding learning and educational interventions

The association between early social learning and non-social learning processes and later intellectual outcomes in typical and atypical development is poorly understood. As these processes are deeply intertwined in typical development, we are investigating and comparing two atypical populations - children with ASD, who typically have reduced social learning capacity, and children with Williams Syndrome - whose engagement in social learning is usually enhanced.

A number of studies focus on early intervention for pre-school children with an ASD, including a new RCT study funded by the NDIA on social inclusion. We will establish whether children receiving their Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) intervention while integrated within a mainstream childcare setting make more or less gains than children receiving the ESDM in a childcare setting including other children with ASD.

Current Studies

- 1. Early learning and intellectual development in autism.**
Researchers: Peter Fanning, Giacomo Vivanti, Darren Hocking & Cheryl Dissanayake
- 2. Social learning and imitation in children with ASD.**
Researchers: Giacomo Vivanti & Cheryl Dissanayake
- 3. Evaluation of the Early Start Denver Model in a group setting.**
Researchers: Giacomo Vivanti, Cheryl Dissanayake, Sally Rogers (MIND Institute at UC Davis, USA) & the Victorian ASELCC Team

4. Comparing learning outcomes of preschoolers with Autism Spectrum Disorder in inclusive versus segregated settings: Testing a new model of early intervention delivery at the Victorian Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre.

Researchers: Giacomo Vivanti, Ed Duncan, Cheryl Dissanayake & the Victorian ASELCC Team

5. Predictors of early intervention outcomes.

Researchers: Giacomo Vivanti, Cheryl Dissanayake & David Trembath (Griffith University)

6. Multi-site randomized controlled trial of an iPad app to complement therapy for children with autism spectrum disorder: The TOBY trial.

Researchers: Andrew Whitehouse (Telethon Kids Institute and University of Western Australia), Svetha Venkatesh (Deakin University), Dennis Moore (Monash University), Amanda Richdale, David Trembath (Griffith University), Angelika Anderson (Monash University), and others

Research Theme 6: Related conditions: Sleep and other difficulties

Sleep difficulties and anxiety commonly occur in children and adults with ASD which can affect learning and behaviour and have a negative impact on family wellbeing. In adults these conditions impact on their everyday functioning in the community and work place. We aim to develop a better understanding of these comorbid conditions which will contribute to the development of better treatment approaches. An important study which is nearing completion is that by PhD candidate Emma Baker who is investigating the roles of melatonin, cortisol and psychopathology in sleep disturbance amongst adolescents and adults with ASD.

Current Studies

1. Predictors of anxiety in young children and adults with autism.

Researchers: Heather J. Nuske, Darren Hedley, Mirko Uljarevic, Amanda Richdale, & Cheryl Dissanayake

2. Does circadian rhythm disturbance explain insomnia in adults with high-functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Researchers: Emma Baker, Amanda Richdale & Agnes Hazi (School of Psychology and Public Health)

3. The influence of bedding, sleep hygiene and environment on sleep in children aged 2 to 10 years: A survey.

Researcher: Amanda Richdale

4. The influence of bedding on sleep in children aged 8 to 10 years.

Researcher: Amanda Richdale

5. Sleep difficulties in ASD: The influence of anxiety, repetitive behaviours and intolerance of uncertainty.

Researchers: Danielle Soliman & Amanda Richdale

6. Investigating behavioural, gastrointestinal, sleep, and diet symptoms in typically developing and Autism Spectrum Disorder children in Australia, the United States, and Bangladesh.

Researchers: Stephanie Mertins & Supervisor Amanda Richdale

Research Theme 7: Success in adulthood

An exciting new research program is underway on successful employment outcomes for adults with ASD, being conducted in partnership with Hewlett Packard Australia, the Specialist People Foundation and the Australian Department of Human Services. A new Research Fellow, Dr Darren Hedley has been appointed to lead the program. There are also a number of Autism CRC projects underway including a longitudinal project of school leavers with ASD.

Current Studies

1. Successful employment outcomes for people with ASD.

Researchers: Darren Hedley, Cheryl Dissanayake, Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

2. Comprehensive and unique profile of Australian school leavers with ASD.

Researchers: Amanda Richdale, Ru Ying Cai & Mirko Uljarevic, Torbjorn Falkmer (Curtin University), Nick Lennox (The University of Queensland), Julian Trollor (University of New South Wales)

3. Optimising recruitment and retention for longitudinal research.

Researchers: Debra Costley (Aspect NSW), Trevor Clarke (Aspect NSW), Torbjorn Falkmer (Curtin University), Amanda Richdale & Kate Sofronoff (University of Queensland)

4. Longitudinal study of adults with ASD.

Researchers: Julian Trollor (The University of New South Wales), Nick Lennox (The University of Queensland), Torbjorn Falkmer (Curtin University), Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

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5. Finding a place in the workplace and in the community: Development and testing of an Educational Vocational Assessment Protocol (EVAP) and an Integrated Employment Success Tool (IEST).

Researchers: Torbjorn Falkmer (Curtin University), Julian Trollor (The University of New South Wales), Nick Lennox (The University of Queensland), Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

6. Painting a picture: Profiles of school leavers with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Researchers: Ru Ying Cai, Amanda Richdale & Cheryl Dissanayake

7. Health and Wellbeing for Adults.

Researchers: Nick Lennox (University of Queensland), Julian Trollor (University of New South Wales), Torbjorn Falkmer (Curtin University), Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

8. Exploring the Presentation and Experience of Anxiety in Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in their Transition from High School to Adulthood: A Qualitative Study.

Researchers: Andrew Halim, Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

9. Factors Affecting Sleep in School Leavers with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Researchers: Kate Miller, Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

10. Anxiety in school leavers: The role of Intolerance of Uncertainty, worry, ASD traits and repetitive behaviours.

Resaerchers: Anshula Pem, Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

Publications

Publications Semester 2, 2014

Bavin, E.L., Kidd, E., Prendergast, L., **Baker, E., Dissanayake, C., & Prior, M.** (2014). Severity of autism is related to children's language processing. *Autism Research*, 7, 687–694. DOI 10.1002/aur.1410

Eapen, V., Woolfenden, S., Williams, K., Jalaludin, B., **Dissanayake, C.**, et al. (2014). "Are you available for the next 18 months?" - Methods and aims of a longitudinal birth cohort study investigating a universal developmental surveillance program: the 'Watch Me Grow' study. *Biomedical Central: Pediatrics*, 14 (234). <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2431/14/234>

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Jacobs, D. & **Richdale, A.** (2014). Language and literacy subtypes in young children with a high functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder. In J.Arcuili & J.Brock (Eds). *Communication in autism. Trends in language acquisition research series*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

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Richdale, A., Baker, E., Short, M., & Gradisar, M. (2014). The role of insomnia, pre-sleep arousal and psychopathology symptoms in daytime impairment in adolescents with high-functioning autism spectrum disorder. *Sleep Medicine*, 15 (9), 1082-1088. DOI 10.1016/j.sleep.2014.05.005

Shelton, A., Cornish, K., Kraan, C., Georgiou-Karistianis, N., Metcalfe, S., Bradshaw, J., **Hocking, D.**, Archibald, A., Cohen, J., Trollor, J. & Fielding, J. (2014). Preliminary evidence for ocular motor inhibitory impairments in female fragile premutation carriers. *Brain & Cognition*, 85, 201-8. DOI 10.1016/j.bandc.2013.12.006.

Veness, C., **Prior, M.**, Eadie, P., Bavin, E., & Reilly, S. (2014). Predicting autism diagnosis by 7 years of age using parent report of infant social communication skills. *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health*, 9, 693-700. DOI 10.1111/jpc.12614

Continued next page

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Vivanti, G., & Rogers, S. (2014). Autism and the Mirror Neuron System: Insights from learning and teaching. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B, Biological Sciences*, 369, online only. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2013.0184>

Vivanti, G., Trembath, D. & **Dissanayake, C.** (2014). Mechanisms of imitation impairment in Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 42, 1395-1405. DOI 10.1007/s10802-014-9874-9

Vivanti, G., Paynter, J., Duncan, E., Fothergill, H., **Dissanayake, C.**, Rogers, S.J. & the Victorian ASELCC Team (online first June 2014). Effectiveness and feasibility of the Early Start Denver Model implemented in a group-based community childcare setting. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 44, 3140-3145. DOI 10.1007/s10803-014-2168-9

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Bent, C., Barbaro, J., & Dissanayake, C. (2015). Mapping the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders in children under 7 years in Australia: 2010 – 2012. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 202, 317-320. DOI 10.5694/mja.14.00328.

Green, C., Dissanayake, C., & Loesch, D. (2015). A review of physical growth in children and adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Developmental Review*, 36, 156-178. doi:10.1016/j.dr.2015.02.001

Guha, T., Yang, Z., Ramakrishna, A., Grossman, R., **Hedley, D.**, Lee, S., & Narayanan, S. (2015). On quantifying facial expression-related atypicality of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Proceedings of the IEEE International Conference on Audio, Speech And Signal Processing (ICASSP)*, Brisbane, Australia, April 19-24.

Hedley, D., Nevill, R. E., Monroy Moreno, Y., Fields, N., Wilkins, J., Butter, E., & Mulick, J. A. (2015). Efficacy of the ADEC in identifying Autism Spectrum Disorder in clinically referred toddlers in the US. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 8, 2337-2348. DOI 10.1007/s10803-015-2398-5 or <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10803-015-2398-5>

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McStay, R., Trembath, D., & **Dissanayake, C.** (2015). Raising a child with autism: A developmental perspective on family adaptation. *Current Developmental Disorders Reports*, 2, 65–83. DOI 10.1007/s40474-014-0037-z

Pokorny, J.J., Hatt, N.V., Colombi, C., **Vivanti, G.**, Rogers, S.J., Rivera, S.M. (2015). The Action Observation System when observing hand actions in autism and typical development. *Autism Research*, 8, 284-96. DOI 10.1002/aur.1445

Trembath, D., **Vivanti, G., Iacono, T., Dissanayake, C.** (2015). Accurate or assumed: Visual learning in children with ASD. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10803-015-2488-4>

Vivanti, G., Salomone, E. (2015). Autism Spectrum Disorders. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed., pp.275-281). Elsevier. DOI 10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.23230-3

Vivanti, G., Pagetti, D. (2015). Italy and Autism. In F. Volkmar. *The Encyclopedia of Autism Spectrum Disorders*. DOI 10.1007/978-1-4614-6435-8_102028-3

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Chaudry, M., & Dissanayake, C. (2015, in press). Pretend play in children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A review of the literature. In Douglas, S & Stirling L (eds), *Children's play, pretence, and story: Studies in culture, context, and Autism Spectrum Disorder*. NY: Psychology Press

Cornish, K.M., Kraan, C.M., Bui, Q.M., Bellgrove, M.A., Metcalfe, S.A., Trollor, T., **Hocking, D.R.**, Slater, H.R., Inaba, Y., Li X., Archibald, A.D., Turbitt, E., Cohen, J., Godler, D.E. (in press). Novel methylation markers of the dysexecutive-psychiatric phenotype in FMR1 premutation females. *Neurology*.

Parkington, K.B., Clements, R.J., **Landry, O. & Chouinard, P.A.** (in press). Visual-motor association learning in undergraduate students as a function of the autism-spectrum quotient. *Experimental Brain Research*.

Young, N., Hudry, K., Trembath, D., **Vivanti, G.** (in press). Information seeking in a pedagogical context by children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and children with developmental delays. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*.

Conference Presentations

(in chronological order)

2014

The International Society on Infant Studies Biennial Conference, Berlin, Germany, 2 - 4 July 2014

Oral Presentations

Barbaro, J. & Dissanayake, C. Efficacy of universal developmental surveillance for the early identification of Autism Spectrum Disorders in infants and toddlers.

Hudry, K., Grant, M., Bedford, R., Pasco, G., Slonims, V., Green, J., Elsabbagh, M., Johnson, M.H., Charman, T. & the BASIS Team. A longitudinal evaluation of parent-child interaction in the context of toddlers at high-risk of autism.

Nuske, H., Hudry, K., Vivanti, G., & Dissanayake, C. Pupillometry reveals reduced implicit emotional reactivity in autism.



Dr Heather Nuske (centre) at the ISIS conference in Berlin with Dr Emily Jones and Dr Caspar Addyman of the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development (CBCD), Birkbeck College

Victorian Autism Conference, Melbourne, 6 – 8 August

Oral Presentations

Barbaro, J. & Dissanayake, C. Universal developmental surveillance for the early identification of Autism Spectrum Disorder in infants and toddlers.

Dissanayake, C. & the Early Assessment Team Early Diagnostic Clinic for Autism Spectrum Disorders: A model for promoting better outcomes.

Hudry, K. Autism and bilingualism: What's the evidence?

Hudry, K. The ADOS: Bringing diagnostic best practice into the community.

Rabba, S. (Presented on behalf of AMAZE) Supporting parents who have ASD.

Richdale, A. L., Cai, R. Y., & Dissanayake, C. Educational experiences and needs of Victorian TAFE and university students with ASD.

Sadka, N. Hi Mum! I'm ready to leave school, are you?

Richdale, A. L. & Cai, R. Y. The impact of demographics and sleep hygiene on sleep in children aged 2-5 years.

Posters

Bent, C., Barbaro, J. & Dissanayake, C. Mapping the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders by age 7 in Australia: 2010 - 2012.

Nuske, H., Vivanti, G. & Dissanayake, C. Reactivity to emotion in familiar and unfamiliar people in children with autism: An eye-tracking pupillometry study.

The 22nd Congress of the European Sleep Research Society, Tallinn, Estonia, 16-20 September

Oral Presentations

Richdale, A. & Cai, R. Y. The impact of demographics and sleep hygiene factors on sleep in children aged 2-10 years.

Baker, E. Sleep patterns in adults with a diagnosis of high-functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder: A preliminary analysis.

Baker, E. Chronic sleep reduction and psychopathology symptoms in adults with high-functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder.



Dr Giacomo Vivanti with Professor Fred Volkmar from Yale University (Editor-in-chief of the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders)

Career Education Association of Victoria Conference, Melbourne, November 12

Cai, R. Y. & Richdale, A. L. Transition issues and support for students attending TAFE and university. (Invited Keynote Address)

International Congress "Autism", Rimini, Italy, 14 November

Vivanti, G. Learning processes in autism. (Invited Keynote Address)

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association convention, Orlando, Florida, 20-22 November

Grossman, R., Huang, Y., **Hedley, D.**, & Narayanan, S. (2014). Multi-modal expressive communication in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. (Oral Presentation)

The Australasian Society for Autism Research Biennial Conference, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 4-5 December

Oral Presentations

Session: Infancy & Toddlerhood. - Chair: Dr Josephine Barbaro

Hudry, K. Elsabbagh, M., Mercure, M., Chandler, S., Pasco, G., Charman, T., Pickles, A., Baron-Cohen, S., Bolton, P., Johnson, M.H & the BASIS Team. Response to dynamic eye gaze: A neural marker for autism in 6-month olds?

Session: Sleep. - Chair: Associate Professor Amanda Richdale

Davis, J. **Richdale, A.L.** & Cotton, S. M. Do ASD symptoms at 2-Years influence the prediction of childhood sleep problems and anxiety from 2- to 8-years?

Continued next page

Conference Presentations

(in chronological order) - continued

Richdale, A., Baker, E. & Whitehouse, A. Are sleep difficulties in ASD related to delayed development, GI symptoms, medical comorbidities or ASD symptom severity?

Mertins, S. & Richdale, A.L. Investigating diet, behavioural, gastrointestinal and sleep problems in children with and without Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Baker, E. & Richdale, A.L. Sleep patterns in adults with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder: A preliminary analysis.

Session: Diagnosis.

Bent, C., Dissanayake, C., & Barbaro, J. Mapping the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders by age 7 in Australia: 2010 – 2012.

Session: Cognition, Emotion and Postural Control.

Fanning, P., Vivanti, G. & Hocking, D. Specificity and prevalence of working memory deficits in ASD and Williams Syndrome.

Nuske, H., Vivanti, G. & Dissanayake, C. Reduced pupil dilation indicates difficulties in learning from others emotions in young children with autism.

Session: Topics in Childhood I.

Dissanayake, C., Choudry, M. & **Barbaro, J.** The development of pretend play in young children with and without an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Ahmed, N.Y. & Parveen, M. Comparison of adaptive behaviors: Findings from Bangladeshi children with and without autism.

Session: Topics in Childhood II. - Chair: Dr Kristelle Hudry

Crea, K., Hudry, K., & Dissanayake, C. Proband mental health difficulties and parental stress predict mental health in toddlers at high-risk for Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Session: Intervention.

Vivanti, G. & The Victorian ASELCC Team. Feasibility, effectiveness and predictors of outcome of children receiving the Early Start Denver Model in a group-based community childcare setting.

Posters

Ahmed, N.Y. & Dissanayake, C. How stress level differs in parents of children with ASD, Downs Syndrome and typically developing children: Findings from Bangladesh.

Baker, E. & Richdale, A. L. Chronic sleep reduction and psychopathology symptoms in adults with high-functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Buntine, M.K., Richdale, A.L., Hale, M., **Dissanayake, C.,** Lesku, J., Kent, S., & Somers, G. Investigating the role of Tryptophan metabolism on ASD-associated behaviours in *Drosophila Melanogaster*.

Grant, M., Hudry, K., & Crea, K. Parent-child communicative interaction in dyads with children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and typically-developing toddlers.

Hedley, D., Nevill, R., Fields, N., Wilkins, J., Mulick, J., & Butter, E. Language profiles in toddlers with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Developmental Delay.

Hocking, D., Ozbilgin, D. & Barbaro, J. The interplay between early motor deficits and later socio-communicative outcomes in children with autism spectrum disorder.

Hudry, K., Grant, M., Bedford, R., Pasco, G., Slonims, V., Green, J., Elsabbagh, M., Johnson, M. H., Charman, T. & the BASIS Team. A longitudinal evaluation of parent-child interaction in the context of toddlers at high-risk of autism.

Kam, R., Hudry, K., Rumney, L., Porter, N., & Cunha, S. The impacts of bilingual exposure on cognitive functioning of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Maya, J., Barbaro, J., Hancock, A., & Hudry, K. Coping and acceptance of a child's recent ASD diagnosis in parents who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

Rabba, S., Dissanayake, C., & Barbaro, J. The development and efficacy of a family clinic for parents following a child's diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Uljarevic, M., Carrington, S., & Leekam, S. Sensory sensitivity and intolerance of uncertainty as correlates of anxiety in mothers of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

Yeo, R., Cai, R., Dissanayake, C., Sivey, P., **Hudry, K.** Community-based support for Australian families with children with newly-diagnosed ASD: An evaluation of service uptake.

Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre Eye-Tracking Forum, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 8 December

Nuske, H. Measuring emotional reactions in people with autism. (Oral Presentation)

2015

Conference "Progetto Michelangelo", University of Pisa, Italy, 24 March

Vivanti, G. Imitation and joint attention in autism. (Invited Keynote Address)

International conference "Light it Blue – Autism Awareness Day", Lugano, Switzerland, 28 March

Vivanti, G. Early intervention in autism: Ethical issues and effectiveness." (Invited Keynote Address)

Continued next page

Conference Presentations

(in chronological order) - continued

World Autism Awareness Day Conference, Rome, Italy, 2 April

Vivanti, G. *Learning in Autism: Bridging the gap between research and practice. (Invited Keynote Address)*

Gatlinburg Conference, New Orleans, USA, 1-3 April

Nevill, R., **Hedley, D.**, Fields, N., Wilkins, J., Mulick, J., & Butter, E. (2015). *Comparisons of language profiles in toddlers with Autism Spectrum Disorder, language disorder, and developmental delay. (Poster)*

IEEE International Conference on Audio, Speech and Signal Processing (ICASSP), Brisbane, Australia, 19-24 April

Guha, T., Yang, Z., Ramakrishna, A., Grossman, R., **Hedley, D.**, Lee, S., & Narayanan, S. *On quantifying facial expression-related atypicality of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. (Oral presentation)*

International Meeting for Autism Research (IMFAR), Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, 13-16 May



Dr Josephine Barbaro presenting at IMFAR 2015.

Keynote Panel Session: Social Learning Processes Underlying Treatment- Related Changes in Children with ASD Receiving the Early Start Denver Model.

Vivanti, G. *Responses to early intervention and mechanisms of change.*

Special Interest Group: Implementing and Evaluating Community-Based Early Intervention. - Chairs: Dr Kristelle Hudry & Dr Giacomo Vivanti

Discussions focused on progress made to-date in conducting community-based evaluation studies of ASD early-intervention, and considered the methodological difficulties and successes encountered. A plan for a strategic way forward for the field was also discussed.

Panel Session: Understanding Early Dyadic Interaction in ASD. – Chair: Dr Kristelle Hudry

Oral Presentations

Hudry, K., Grant, M., Bedford, R., Pasco, G., Slonims, V., Green, J., Elsabbagh, M., Johnson, M.H. & Charman, T. *A longitudinal examination of parent-child interaction in the context of toddlers at high-risk of autism.*

Barbaro, J. & Dissanayake, C. *Early ASD surveillance and screening: Universal developmental surveillance for Autism Spectrum Disorders in infants and toddlers using the Social Attention and Communication Study-Revised (SACS-R).*

Evans, D.W. & **Uljarevic, M.** *Repetitive and restricted behaviours in the general population: Validation and heritability of two new instruments for parents and children.*

Posters

Clark, M., Barbaro, J. & Dissanayake, C. *The Social Attention and Communication Study: A school age follow-up.*

Bent, C.A., Dissanayake, C. & Barbaro, J. *Mapping the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders by age 7 in Australia: 2010 – 2012.*

Dissanayake, C., Mcstay, R. & Trembath, D. *Raising a child with Autism: A developmental perspective on parental adaptation*

Ozturk, Y., **Dissanayake, C. & Vivanti, G.** *Well-being of mothers of preschoolers with autism is mediated by their children's treatment-related improvements in every-day communication.*

Hocking, D.R. & Vivanti, G. *Dissociable components of imitation underlie learning abilities in autism versus William Syndrome and mediate treatment outcomes.*

Hocking, D.R. & Vivanti, G. *Evidence for specificity of visuomotor sequencing deficits and relation to cognitive outcomes in autism and Williams Syndrome.*

Baker, E.K. & Richdale, A.L. *Chronic sleep reduction and psychopathology symptoms in adults with high-functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder.*

Baker, E.K. Richdale, A.L. & Soliman, D. *Sleep problems in Autism Spectrum Disorders: The influence of anxiety, restricted and repetitive behaviours and intolerance of uncertainty.*

Nuske, H.J., Vivanti, G. & Dissanayake, C. *No evidence of emotion dysregulation or aversion to mutual gaze in preschoolers with autism – an eye-tracking pupillometry study.*

Hocking, D.R. & Vivanti, G. *Dissociable components of imitation underlie learning abilities in autism versus William Syndrome and mediate treatment outcomes.*

Future Horizons, NDCO One Day Autism Conference, Hobart, Tasmania, 16 June

Dr Nancy Sadka

It's time to wake up – Choice and control under the NDIS.

Research Grants

Ongoing research grants

National Health and Medical Research Council Project Grant (2011-2015) – Prenatal and early postnatal risk factors in ASD – Whitehouse, A., Maybery, M., **Dissanayake, C.**, Hickey, M. & Pennell, C.

The Apex Foundation Trust for Autism (2012-2015) – Circadian rhythm dysfunction in adults with high-functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder: Evidence from dim-light melatonin onset – PhD student award to **Emma Baker**, supervised by **Richdale, A.** & Hazi, A.

Australian Research Council Linkage Projects Scheme (2012-2016) - Enhancing learning capacity and academic outcomes using novel game technology in primary school children with developmental disabilities - Cornish, K., Gray, K., **Hocking, D.**, Ellis, K., Harcourt, J. & McIntosh, K.

The William and Vera Houston Memorial Trust (2013-2015) - Parenting and child outcomes: An exploratory study of the impact of autism symptoms - **Dissanayake, C. & Richdale, A.**

National Health and Medical Research Council Project Grant (2013-2015) – Characterization of a novel epigenetic boundary and long range epigenetic modifications specific to FMR1 expansion carriers with behavioural and cognitive disorders – implications for earlier diagnosis and treatment. – Slater, H., Godler, D., Amor, D., **Dissanayake, C.** & Bui, M.

Playgroup Australia (2014-2015) - Strengthening PlayConnect: Expert advice and current service evaluation - **Hudry, K., Nadachowski, W. & Dissanayake, C.**

La Trobe University Research Focus Area 'Building Healthy Communities' (2014-2015) - Translating autism research excellence to a regional service through Telehealth - **Iacono, T., Hudry, K.**, Hulme-Chambers, A., Erickson, S., Trembath, D. & McConnachie, S.

Macquarie University Research Development Grants (2014-2015) - The role of oxytocin in modulating anxiety and social behaviour in neurodevelopmental and anxiety disorders - Porter, M., **Hocking, D.**, Wong Q., Williams, M., Rapee, R., **Dissanayake, C.**, Kent, S.

Autism CRC Core Program 1 (2014-2017) - Project 1.001RC, Base Resources Project - Whitehouse, A., **Dissanayake, C.**, Eapen, V. & Heussler, H.

Autism CRC Core Program 1 (2014-2015) - Project 1.002RC, Creation of Autism Biobank - Whitehouse, A., **Dissanayake, C.**, Eapen, V. & Heussler, H.

Autism CRC Core Program 1 (2014-2017) - Project 1.005RC, Developmental Surveillance for ASD - **Dissanayake, C. & Barbaro, J.**

Autism CRC Core Program 1 (2014 -2017) – Project 1.022RC, Family Support Program – **Barbaro J. & Dissanayake C.**

Autism CRC Core Program 3 (2014-2017) - Project 3.012RC, Base Resources Project – **Richdale, A.**, Falkmer, T., Lennox, N. & Troller, J.

Autism CRC Core Program 3 (2014-2017) - Project 3.016RC, Unique ASD Profile School Leavers - **Richdale, A.**, Falkmer, T., Lennox, N. & Troller, J.

Veski Victorian Fellowships (2014-2015) - Training on brain imaging and psychophysiology techniques for application with infants/toddlers with autism - **Nuske, H. J.**

New research grants

Hewlett Packard Australia (2015-2018) - Successful employment outcomes for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder - **Dissanayake, C., Richdale, A., Hedley, D. & Uljaravic, M.**

National Disability Insurance Scheme (2015 - 2016) - Benefits of inclusion for children with ASD - **Vivanti, G.**, Ed Duncan & **Dissanayake, C.**,

La Trobe University Research Focus Area 'Understanding Disease' (2015 - 2016) - Understanding the role of oxytocin in shaping social affiliation and social processing in young children with autism and Williams syndrome - **Hocking, D., Vivanti, G., Bishop, N., Iacono, T., Dissanayake, C. & Kent, S.**

La Trobe University Research Focus Area 'Understanding Disease' (2015) - Restoring normal function in a mouse model of autism spectrum disorder – Hale, M., Lesku, J., Kettle, C., Kent, S., **Richdale, A. & Dissanayake, C.**

Pierce Armstrong Foundation (2015) - Development of an emotional regulation intervention for young children with autism or developmental delays - **Nuske, H.**

Australian Catholic University Research Funding (2015) - A neurobiological comparison of social cognitive deficits in young adults with neurodevelopmental and anxiety disorders - Labuschagne, I. & **Hocking, D.**

Other grants

The William Buckland Foundation (2012-2015) - Early Diagnostic Clinic for Autism Spectrum Disorders – **Dissanayake, C. and the EDC Team.**

Menzies Foundation (2014) - The Menzies Foundation Symposium on Early Identification, Diagnosis, and Intervention in Autism Spectrum Disorders and Keynote Lecture by Professor Catherine Lord at the Australasian Society for Autism Research (ASfAR) Conference - **Barbaro, J.**

OTARC Meetings

The OTARC Advisory Committee

This Committee (See page 39) met three times to assist in guiding the direction and operation of the Centre. Meeting dates in the 12 months from July 1, 2014:

- 15 August 2014 (followed by the Annual General Meeting)
- 14 November 2014
- 27 March 2015

Lab Meetings

OTARC Students met monthly with the Laboratory Manager, Carmela Germano and relevant staff, to discuss their ongoing work and research needs.

Staff Meetings

Formal staff meetings were held fortnightly. Informal staff meetings occurred frequently each week, as required, to discuss administration and research ideas, directions and needs. This enables the Centre to foster our collaborative research initiatives around particular projects. The Administrative staff members met weekly to address issues related to administrative support for researchers and research projects.

Monthly Research Seminars:

July – December 2014

18 July 2014

Jackie W. Cheung, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Information Technology, Monash University.
Online information for ASD treatment decision makers: Essential information elements and research needs.

22 August 2014

Associate Professor Susana Gavidia-Payne, School of Health Sciences, RMIT.
Understanding family outcomes in early childhood intervention.

19 September 2014

Dr Maree Dyson, Principal DCG and Associate Professor La Trobe University.
National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS): What matters to insurance scheme and implications for autism researchers and services.

24 October 2014

Yagmur Ozturk, Department of Psychology and Cognitive Science, University of Trento, Rovereto, Italy.
Well-being in parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

21 November 2014

Lacey Chetcuti, Honours student, OTARC, La Trobe University.
Research Proposal: Spontaneous imitation in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Effect of task complexity and demonstrator responsiveness.

Dr Darren Hedley, Research Fellow, OTARC, La Trobe University.
Introducing myself and my research.

27 March 2015

Dr Naomi Bishop, School of Life Sciences, La Trobe University.
Autism: Thinking outside the [brain] box.
Three of Dr Bishop's PhD candidates also presented:

- Oonagh BODIN. *The role of gut microbiota in autism.*
- Anya SHINDLER. *Single nucleotide polymorphisms and gut dysfunction in autism.*
- Rosie DONALDSON. *Understanding comorbid medical conditions in autism.*

17 April 2015

Dr Oriane Landry, School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University.
Visual orienting in autism and the broader autism phenotype.

1 May 2015

Dr Tim Smith, Psychological Sciences, Birkbeck, University of London, UK.
Individual differences in the development of eye movement control.

Dr Rachael Bedford, Institute of Psychiatry, Kings College London, UK.
Modelling development: Social and non-social attention in infants at risk for ASD.

5 June 2015

Associate Professor Peter Enticott, School of Psychology, Deakin University.
How can cognitive neuroscience advance our understanding of autism spectrum disorder?

Objective 2

Facilitate collaboration with other research centres, both nationally and internationally

In addition to our national collaborations within the Autism CRC, we continue to work with many researchers in Australia and overseas to ensure national and international relevance of our research. The varied areas of research expertise of our staff also attract a multitude of visitors to OTARC.

Research Collaborators and Partnerships

1. Collaborators at La Trobe University

- **Dr Edith Bavin**, School of Psychology and Public Health
- **Dr Alana Hulme Chambers**, La Trobe Rural Health School
- **Ms Agnes Hazi**, School of Psychology and Public Health
- **Professor Teresa Iacono**, Head of La Trobe Rural Health School
- **Associate Professor Stephen Kent**, School of Psychology and Public Health
- **Dr John Lesku**, School of Life Sciences
- **Associate Professor Seng Loke**, School of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences
- **Dr Peter Sivey**, La Trobe Business School
- **Dr Torab Torabi**, School of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences

2. Victorian Collaborators

- **Dr Angelika Anderson**, Faculty of Education, Monash University
- **Dr Minh Bui**, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne
- **Associate Professor Jeffrey Craig**, Early Life Epigenetics, Department of Paediatrics, University of Melbourne
- **Dr Susan Douglas**, School of Languages and Linguistics, University of Melbourne

- **Dr Patricia Eadie**, Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, and Royal Children's Hospital
- **Dr Cherie Green**, Department of Medicine, Austin Health, University of Melbourne.
- **Dr Diane Jacobs**, School of Allied Health, Australian Catholic University
- **Dr Jordy Kaufman**, Swinburne Brain Sciences Institute, Swinburne University of Technology
- **Dr Izelle Labuschagne**, Faculty of Health Sciences, Australian Catholic University.
- **Associate Professor Neil McLachlan**, School of Psychological Sciences, University of Melbourne
- **Professor Dennis Moore**, Faculty of Education, Monash University
- **Professor Sheena Reilly**, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, University of Melbourne, and Menzies Health Institute Queensland, Griffith University, Queensland.
- **Professor Svetha Venkatesh**, Director of the Centre for Pattern Recognition and Data Analytics, Deakin University
- **Dr Cathy Marraffa**, **Professor Katrina Williams**, **Professor Jill Sewell** and **Ms Amanda Brignell**, Centre for Community Child Health and Department of Developmental Medicine, Royal Children's Hospital and University of Melbourne
- **Ms Karen McKinnon**, **Ms Chris Stocco** and **Ms Kathleen Franks**, Autism Partnerships
- **Dr David Godler**, **Professor Howard Slater** and **Associate Professor Lesley Bretherton**, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, University of Melbourne

3. National Collaborators

- **Dr Jill Ashburner**, Autism Queensland
- **Ms Kate Bowen**, Liverpool Hospital, Sydney
- **Professor Neil Brewer**, School of Psychology, Flinders University
- **Dr Debra Costley**, Aspect NSW

- **Professor Valsamma Eapen**, Department Infant, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of New South Wales
- **Professor Torbjorn Falkmer**, School of Occupational Therapy and Social Work, Curtin University
- **Dr Michael Gradisar**, Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, School of Psychology, Flinders University
- **Dr Evan Kidd**, Department of Psychology, Australian National University
- **Associate Professor Alison Lane**, School of Health Sciences, University of Newcastle
- **Professor Nick Lennox**, Queensland Centre for Intellectual and Developmental Disability, Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, University of QLD
- **Professor Murray Maybery**, School of Psychology, University of Western Australia
- **Dr Mark Nielsen**, Department of Psychology, University of Queensland
- **Dr Jessica Paynter**, AEIOU Foundation, Queensland
- **Associate Professor Melanie Porter**, Department of Psychology, Macquarie University
- **Dr Lyndsay Quarmby**, Centre for Rural Health (CRH), School of Health Sciences, University of Tasmania
- **Dr Michelle Short**, Centre for Sleep Research, University of South Australia
- **Associate Professor Kate Sofronoff**, School of Psychology, University of Queensland
- **Dr Lauren Taylor**, School of Psychology, University of Western Australia
- **Professor Leanne Togher**, Senior National Health and Medical Research Council Research Fellow, University of Sydney
- **Professor Julian Trollor**, Chair of Intellectual Disability Mental Health, Head, Department of Developmental Disability Neuropsychiatry, School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales
- **Dr Marleen Westerveld**, School of Allied Health Sciences, Griffith University

Research Collaborators and Partnerships *continued*

- **Professor Andrew Whitehouse**, Telethon Kids Institute, University of Western Australia
 - **Associate Professor Robyn Young**, School of Psychology, Flinders University, SA
 - **Autism Specific Early Learning and Child Care National Clinical Evaluation Group**, includes researchers from University of New South Wales, University of Queensland, Flinders University, Curtin University, and the University of Tasmania.
 - **Parenting Research Centre and the Raising Children Network**
 - **Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER)**, including **Dr Julie Kos**
- #### 4. International Collaborators
- **Dr Rachael Bedford**, Institute of Psychiatry, Kings College London, UK
 - **Dr Sander Begeer**, Developmental Psychology, VU University Amsterdam, The Netherlands
 - **Dr Eric Butter**, Nationwide Children's Hospital and The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA
 - **Dr Sarah Carrington**, School of Life & Health Sciences, Aston University, Birmingham, UK
 - **Professor Tony Charman**, Institute of Psychiatry, Kings College London, UK
 - **Dr Kate Ellis-Davies**, Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge, UK
 - **Dr Mayada Elsabbagh**, Department of Psychiatry, McGill University, Montreal, Canada
 - **Professor David Evans**, Department of Psychology, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, USA
 - **Professor Jonathan Green**, School of Medicine, University of Manchester, UK
 - **Dr Teodora Gliga**, Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development, Birkbeck, University of London, UK
 - **Dr Robert Hepach**, Department of Developmental and Comparative Psychology, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Germany
 - **Professor Pat Howlin**, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College, London, UK
 - **Professor Mark Johnson**, Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development, Birkbeck College, London, UK
 - **Dr Emily Jones**, Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development, Birkbeck College, London, UK
 - **Dr Terry Katz**, Department of Pediatrics, University of Colorado School of Medicine, Denver, USA
 - **Professor Emiko Kezuka**, Gunma Prefectural Women's University; **Associate Professor Hiroshi Miyauchi** (Takasaki University of Health and Welfare); **Dr Midori Okuno** (Gunma Paz College)
 - **Dr Elizabeth Kryszak**, Nationwide Children's Hospital and The Ohio State University, Columbus, USA
 - **Dr Joanna Kwasiborska-Dudek**, Department of Speech Therapy, Academy of Special Education, Warsaw, Poland
 - **Professor Ann Le Couteur**, Institute of Health and Society, Newcastle University, UK
 - **Professor Sue Leekam**, Chair of Autism Research, The Wales Autism Research Centre, Cardiff University, UK
 - **Dr Gongsui Liu**, Director of Child Health, Tiangin Women and Children's Health Centre, Tiangin, China
 - **Dr Iliana Magiati**, Department of Psychology, National University of Singapore, Singapore
 - **Professor Beth Malow**, Kennedy Center, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, USA
 - **Professor Helen McConachie**, Institute of Health and Society, Newcastle University, UK

- **Professor James A. Mulick**, Nationwide Children's Hospital and The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA
- **Professor Filippo Muratori**, Scientific Institute Stella Maris, University of Pisa, Calambrone, Italy
- **Dr Greg Pasco**, Institute of Psychiatry, Kings College London, UK
- **Professor Andrew Pickles**, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College, London, UK
- **Professor Sally Rogers**, MIND Institute, University of California, Davis in Sacramento, USA
- **Dr Atsushi Senju**, Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development, Birkbeck College, London, UK
- **Professor Kimberley Schreck**, School of Behavioral Sciences & Education, Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburgh, USA
- **Dr Vicky Slonims**, Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital, London, UK
- **Associate Professor Mikle South**, Emotion and Decision Making Laboratory, Brigham Young University, Utah, USA
- **Professor Elizabeth Starr**, Faculty of Education, University of Windsor, Ontario Canada
- **Dr Ming Wai Wan**, School of Medicine, University of Manchester, UK
- **Associate Professor Chongying Wang**, Medical School, Nankai University, Tianjin, China
- **Dr Jonathan Wilkins**, Nationwide Children's Hospital and The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA
- **Dr Kent Williams**, Nationwide Children's Hospital, Columbus, Ohio, USA
- **Autism Treatment Network, USA**

Visitors to our Centre

2014



July 2014 – June 2015

Associate Professor Lesley Stirling from the School of Languages and Linguistics at the University of Melbourne spent her sabbatical leave at OTARC during semester two, 2014. She is working with Professor Cheryl Dissanayake on a project focused on communication during pretend play in young children with ASD. She is grateful for the assistance by OTARC volunteers who helped analyzing video recordings of pretend play interactions. While at OTARC she also worked on a new book, co-edited with Susan Douglas, which is due to appear later in 2015: *Children's Play, Pretense, and Story: Studies in Culture, Context, and ASD*. Lesley continues to visit OTARC during 2015 to complete the analysis of the play data and to commence a new joint project funded by the Autism CRC, which is exploring home communication about school events between children with ASD and their parents.



July
Dr Yuan Gao from Beijing China visited OTARC. He is a parent of a teenage boy with autism. Dr Gao has become an OTARC adjunct staff member working with us to facilitate our ongoing work in Tianjin, China.



September

Chantal Sicile-Kira visited OTARC to discuss issues related to adults with ASD. She is author of the Award winning book *Autism Spectrum Disorder* (2014, Penguin) and the mother of Jeremy, a young adult with autism. She established the Autism College - www.autismcollege.com - to provide online training for the general public.



Professor Emiko Kezuka, Associate Professor Hiroshi Miyauchi and Dr Midori Okuno visited OTARC for a week in September in order to build on our joint work in Tamamura, Japan. Dr Kezuka presented data from the SACS-Japan study.

Dr Vicky Slonims, Consultant Speech and Language Therapist from Guys' and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust in London, joined Dr Kristelle Hudry and Junior Trainers Dr Cherie Green and Emma Baker for the September 2014 ADOS training. See ADOS Training, page 31.

December



Left to right: Mr Ed Duncan (Speech and Language Therapist and Clinical Manager of the Margot Prior Wing), Dr Giacomo Vivanti, Professor Sue Leekam, Professor Cathy Lord, Dr Andy Shih, Ms Jenny Reynolds (Children's Centre Manager) and Professor Margot Prior.

In December OTARC hosted several international and interstate visitors who were invited to speak at the ASfAR conference and the Menzies Foundation Symposium. They also visited the Victorian Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre at La Trobe Children's Centre.

Professor Catherine Lord, Director of the Center for Autism and the Developing Brain at Presbyterian Hospital, Weill Cornell Medical College, and Columbia University. She is most known for her work on diagnosis, social and communication development and intervention of children with ASD. Professor Lord co-developed the standardized diagnostic instruments for ASD: the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) and the Autism Diagnostic Interview – Revised (ADI-R).

Dr Andy Shih, Vice President of Scientific Affairs of Autism Speaks. Dr Shih oversees the Autism Speaks public health portfolio, which includes the Global Autism Public Health Initiative, an international ASD advocacy, research and development effort active in over 60 countries.

Continued next page

Professor Sue Leekam, Chair in Autism at Cardiff University and Director of the Wales Autism Research Centre. Professor Leekam's research focuses on cognitive, social and behavioural development in autism with a recent focus in attention, sensory processing and repetitive behaviours. She has published the Diagnostic Interview of Social and Communication Disorders (DISCO), which is now used worldwide by clinicians.

Associate Professor Robyn Young, School of Psychology at Flinders University, is known for her research on diagnosis and intervention for children with ASD, and more recently, on forensic matters with adults with ASD. She has developed a screening tool 'Autism Detection in Early Childhood' (ADEC) and an early intervention program for children with ASD (SPECTRA). See also page 4.

2015

February

Associate Professor Mitch Byrne, School of Psychology, University of Wollongong

Professor Marc de Rosnay, Early Start, University of Wollongong



May



Dr Tim Smith and Dr Rachel Bedford with Dr Kristelle Hudry and Dr Darren Hocking

Dr Tim Smith, Senior Lecturer, Psychological Sciences, Birkbeck, University of London and **Dr Rachael Bedford**, Sir Henry Wellcome Postdoctoral Fellow, Institute of Psychiatry, Kings College, London, gave presentations at OTARC's monthly seminar.

Professor Torbjorn Falkmer, Curtin University, is Leader of Autism CRC Program 3. He gave a presentation on the CRC research underway at Curtin University.



Standing: Professor Cheryl Dissanayake, Associate Professor Amanda Richdale and Dr Darren Hedley. Seated: Mr Wojciech Nadachowski, Professor Torbjorn Falkmer and Dr Mirko Uljarevic

June



Photo: Dr Nancy Sadka (EAC Intake Officer), Mr Bernie Finn MP, Professor Dissanayake and Ms Katrina Raphael.

Bernie Finn MP, Victorian State Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Autism Spectrum Disorder and for Melbourne's West visited OTARC and spoke with our Director, Professor Dissanayake, who showed him our research facilities, the Early Assessment Clinic (EAC) and the Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre (ASELCC). Bernie Finn MP came with Katrina Raphael, his policy advisor on ASD.

OTARC folk, out & about



Dr Kristelle Hudry and Dr Josephine Barbaro at the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development

July 2014

Dr Kristelle Hudry and **Dr Josephine Barbaro** visited the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development (CBCD) at Birkbeck College in London where they worked with Dr Emily Jones, Professors Mark Johnson and Tony Charman and their team of researchers on the Studying Autism and ADHD Risk in Siblings (STAARS) project. Together they are planning a collaborative study on the early signs of ASD and the development of young children at risk of developing ASD.



Dr Yuan Gao, OTARC Adjunct, gave a workshop in Inner Mongolia in mid January.

January 2015

Dr Yuan Gao, OTARC adjunct staff member, gave several presentations in China about autism and the research at OTARC. One of the presentations was held in Beijing for leaders of the China Mental Disability Association, including Ms Wen Hong, President of the China Disabled Person's Federation.



Professor Kezuka, Mr Joe Fukamachi and Dr Vivanti

April 2015

Dr Giacomo Vivanti visited Gunma Prefectural Women's University, Japan, at the invitation of Professor Emiko Kezuka, to give a lecture on OTARC's research on early learning and early intervention in Autism to an audience of 300 psychologists, practitioners in early intervention and childcare workers. During his visit, Dr Vivanti was also interviewed by a local newspaper.

Objective 3

Foster and support a National Research Network investigating the cause and management of ASD.

OTARC has been centrally involved in establishing two large national initiatives: The Autism CRC and ASfAR, and continues to play a key role in both.



Co-operative Research Centre for Living with Autism Spectrum Disorders

The Autism CRC is well underway, having completed two years of operation with over 40 funded projects. Mr Andrew Davis was appointed as the CEO in September 2014, with Professor Sylvia Rodgers continuing as the Director of Research and Education. The inaugural scholar's day, held at La Trobe University (the only essential partner in Victoria to date) on December 3, 2014, was a great success, and was followed by an open information session. The Board and staff of the CRC were able to come together to learn of the progress being made across three programs and to meet and spend time with members of the Autism CRC research teams.

At OTARC we are working closely with our national colleagues on building capacity in early behavioural developmental surveillance for ASD, in developing supports for newly diagnosed families, collecting phenotypic data of affected children and their parents, engaging adults with ASD in research as well as researching the unique profile of school leavers with an ASD. Our two CRC postdoctoral fellows working at OTARC (Dr Heather Nuske and Dr Mirko Uljaravic), we have two CRC PhD scholars (Stacey Rabba and Ru Cai) working on CRC projects with us, as well as an Australian Autism Biobank Research Officer, Ms Melanie Muniandy. Professor Dissanayake leads a strategic project on developmental surveillance together with Dr Josephine Barbaro who also leads the family support program – a program for families of newly diagnosed children. Both projects are within *Core Program 1: A better start*. Working in *Core Program 3: Creating a future*, Associate Professor Amanda Richdale leads a longitudinal study of adolescents and adults with ASD.

In addition, together with our Western Australian colleagues, Dr Kristelle Hudry has developed a Graduate Certificate in Identification and Diagnosis of ASD which is being rolled out at the University of Western Australia this year, and at La Trobe University in 2017. Professor Dissanayake is on the Research and Development Committee and the Biobank Operations Committee of the CRC.

A number of CRC researchers, including CRC PhD students, presented their work at the ASfAR conference, with a special poster session convened by Professor Patricia Howlin. Ms Megan Hatfield from Curtin University won the inaugural Autism CRC Poster Prize. Professor Sylvia Rodger and Dr Kate Van Dooren launched the Inclusive Research Practice Guide and Checklist, designed to engage individuals with ASD and their families in research (available on the CRC website).



ASfAR was formally established in 2011 as a result of an OTARC initiative. Its membership has steadily grown over the years to the current 370 members, including international members from the Asia Pacific Region.

The second biennial research meeting was hosted by OTARC at La Trobe University (December 4 – 5) with Keynote speakers Professor Cathy Lord, Dr Andy Shih and Professor Sue Leekam, and other distinguished guests, including Professor Patricia Howlin, who convened the poster session and presented the CRC student poster award.

The ASfAR Annual General Meeting was held on Friday December 5, with a newly elected Executive Committee. Professor Katrina Williams stepped down as President following a two-year term, and Professor Deb Keen and Dr Jon Brock stepped down as ordinary and co-opted members, respectively. A ballot was held at the conference to vote for a President.

The new executive comprises:

Dr Trevor Clark, President;
Professor Cheryl Dissanayake, Vice President;
Associate Professor Mark Stokes, Treasurer/Secretary;
Professor Sylvia Rodger, Autism CRC Representative;
Ms Clare Holmes, Postgraduate Student Representative;

Ordinary Members:

- **Professor Andrew Whitehouse**;
- **Dr David Trembath**;
- **Professor Jacqui Roberts**; and
- **Professor Valsa Eapen**.

Ms Mary Hawkins, NDIA Branch Manager, spoke at the AGM about the current status of the NDIS and its key features with regards to planning and funding packages for people with an ASD.

Objective 4

Conduct campaigns to improve the public profile of autism research, thereby attracting additional research funds via grants and donations.

We continue to undertake and participate in activities to enhance the awareness and profile of autism research in the community by engaging with the media, as well as using social networking opportunities to extend our reach.

We have close to 1800 followers on FACEBOOK, and more followers on Twitter (individuals and organisations) who, in turn, reach out to many thousands of other followers! We averaged 4000 external visits each month to our Centre website [www.latrobe.edu.au/otarc] over the last year, and have close to 1900 research participants on our email list. We have over 6000 subscribers to our newsletter/blog. Subscribers receive our quarterly newsletter/BLOG *Another Piece*.

Media Activities

4 July 2014

NineMSN - Health

Genetic mutation behind some autism cases.

By Kimberly Gillan

Professor Cheryl Dissanayake was interviewed for this article.

7 August 2014

The Daily News/AAP and Channel 9 News

Dr Josephine Barbaro was interviewed for both news items about research on the SACS that she presented at the Victorian Autism Research Conference.

12 August 2014

The Age, Melbourne

Students with autism worried about discrimination at university.

By Benjamin Pries, Education reporter

Associate Professor Amanda Richdale was interviewed about her research on the needs and experiences of Victorian TAFE and university students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

24 November 2014

The Conversation

Parents don't cause Autism, but they can make a difference.

By **Dr Kristelle Hudry**.

25 November 2014

2UE Sydney Radio

Dr Kristelle Hudry was interviewed by Angela Catterns about her article in The Conversation.



ABC presenter, Hillary Harper and Dr Kristelle Hudry

29 November 2014

774 ABC

Dr Kristelle Hudry was interviewed by Hillary Harper about her article in The Conversation.

4 March 2015

The Conversation

By **Dr Kristelle Hudry**

How to spot an Autism Spectrum Disorder in school-age children.

6 April 2015

Cathy Bent, OTARC PhD student, published a paper Mapping the age of diagnosis of autism in Australia: 2010 – 2012 with her supervisors **Professor Cheryl Dissanayake** and **Dr Josephine Barbaro**, which received a lot of media attention.

- The Age & Sydney Morning Herald
Autism study: Diagnosis delayed by two years in most children.
By Nicki Phillips, Science Editor
- Business Insider Australia
Autism is being diagnosed late in Australian children.
By Chris Pash .
- ABC AM Radio 774
Interview with Richard Stubbs
Autism report shows delay in diagnosis for young children.

Continued next page

Media Activities *continued*

15 April 2015

Leader Newspapers – Diamond Valley
Artists shine light on Autism.

An article promoting OTARC's 'Frame of Mind Exhibition 2015' with an interview with artist Ray David, who submitted two of his works to the exhibition.

19 May 2015

Medscape Medical News - Conference News
By Pam Harrison

Developmental Surveillance Best for Early Autism Detection.
Dr Josephine Barbaro was interviewed, following her presentation at IMFAR, about the SACS.

28 May 2015

ABC Radio National "Life Matters"
When your child with autism can't speak, how do you communicate?
With Natasha Mitchell

Dr Giacomo Vivanti and Dr Nancy Sadka participated in this discussion which also included Ms Christine Kendall, Speech pathologist and Director of Spectrum Speech Pathology and talk-back from listeners.

18 June 2015

ABC Radio 774
With Richard Stubbs
The Dandelion Project.

Professor Cheryl Dissanayake was interviewed about the Hewlett Packard and Specialisterne employment opportunity for young adults with ASD.

Talking ASD Research Online



Inside the Lab – Episode 6: Early Autism and Global Knowledge Transfer

Dr Josephine Barbaro was joined by Professor Catherine Lord and Dr Andy Shih in December 2014 to discuss early identification and diagnosis of ASD as well as global knowledge transfer.

Inside the Lab – Episode 7: Employing adults with ASD

Professor Cheryl Dissanayake, Thorkil Sonne and Michael Fieldhouse discuss the implementation of the Specialist People Foundation employment model for adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders, with OTARC as research partner.

Vodcast: Learning & Teaching



Given that most of the intervention approaches for ASD are educational, Dr Giacomo Vivanti outlines why it is critical to undertake research to help us understand how children with ASD learn and what teaching strategies benefits them most.

Ask an Autism Researcher

In the past 12 months we have answered 38 questions via our Ask a Researcher online service. The answers to the following questions have been published in our online newsletter/BLOG because we considered them of interest to a wider audience.

- *Do Children with ASD 'hear voices'?*
- *What is DAMP?*
- *Have any studies have been done on diet change for children with ASD?*
- *Home-based programs for adults*
- *Is there evidence that Autism Assistance Dogs effective for supporting children with ASD?*

Newsletter/BLOG

Popular feature articles during the last twelve months have included:

- *Wellbeing of toddler-aged siblings of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).* By Katherine (Kat) Crea
- *An investigation into sleep difficulties in adults with high-functioning ASD.* By Emma Baker and Associate Professor Amanda Richdale.
- *Taking the OTARC method of early detection of ASD to the world: Can ASD be identified using a mobile app?* By Wojciech Nadachowski.
- *Well-being in mothers after their child's recent ASD diagnosis.* By Jackie Maya
- *Investigating behavioural, gastrointestinal, sleep and diet in typically developing children and children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Australia, the United States and Bangladesh.* By Stephanie Mertins and Associate Professor Amanda Richdale.

Donations 2014

A total of \$521,829.24 was received in donations
(see financial statement — Pages 36 and 37)

Principal individual donor: Mrs Olga Tennison
Other significant donors: Dr Sylvia Walton

Individual donations

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Individual donors (48): | \$517,816.04 |
| Organisational donations: | \$1,015.00 |
| Everyday Hero Fundraising | \$3,998.20 |

Everyday Hero fundraisers

Several of our friends and colleagues raised funds for OTARC through Everyday Hero

- **Melanie Muniandy** took part in The Age Run Melbourne 2014 and raised over \$2,859.50
- **Logesvary Krishnasamy** ran in Run for Autism and raised \$1,138.70

OTARC sends a heartfelt thank you to all the donors who supported Melanie and Annie in their fundraising events.

Volunteering at OTARC

OTARC has a database of over 240 volunteers willing to help in various capacities. They contribute their knowledge and skills in administration, event planning, research support, and fundraising. We undertook a survey of OTARC Volunteers in May 2015, which helped us to determine how best to use their skills and to optimise their experience when working with us.

We are grateful to the following volunteers who helped in a large number of volunteer activities throughout the last twelve months and send a big vote of thanks to them.

Dilan Alakoc
Jacyra Araujo
Sophie Athan
Erin Battersby
Daniel Berends
Natalie Bischof
Coree Brewster-Devlin
Lauren Cameron
Lacey Checuti
Jenny Clarke
Alana Cross
Matthew Digby
Siobhan Ede
Claire Ellul
Larissa Fogdenc
Jessica Ford
Emily Fyson
Samantha Galea
Simone Giampaolo
Cherie Green
Ellen Hall
Gabrielle Hall

Ashlee Hancock
Amy Handley
Lana Harris
Mark Jones (Capital University,
Columbus, Ohio)
Stefanie Kabitz
Amanjit Kaur
Natasha Kolivas
Siobhan Korbut
Liz Lennox
Samantha Liistro
Shyan Low
Akanesi Lui
Amy Luu
Ayesha Maharaj
Alice Maier

Silvana Marian
Jackie Maya
Lisa McLean
Melanie Muniandy
Aleshia Nanev
Angie Parsons
Georgia Petrou
Kira Polonowita
Glen Rattenbury
Meg Rosse
Nancy Sadka
Ensu Sahin
Danielle Smith
Jared Talavera
Dyna Thomas
Shannon Thompson

Liv Trencher
Alina Tsebri
Jess Tsoutsoulis
Pinar Uluer
Evrin Ulusoy
Jenn Vong
Nicole Wigney
Jessica Woodhead
Alex Woollacott
Rachel Yeo



These smiling student volunteers were a vital part of making the 2014 ASFAR conference run smoothly. They are from left to right: Ashlee Hancock, Claire Ellul, Jackie Maya, Danielle Smith and Lacey Chetcuti.

Objective 5

Provide opportunities for student based research and early career mentoring programs

A total of 31 students (Honours, Masters, Doctoral, and PhD candidates) undertook their research at the Centre within the last year, with 9 of them successfully completing their research studies in 2014/15.

2015 Students

PhD Candidates

Emma Baker - Supervisors: Associate Professor Amanda Richdale and Ms Agnes Hazi

Cathy Bent - Supervisors: Professor Cheryl Dissanayake and Dr Josephine Barbaro

Ru Ying Cai - Supervisors: Associate Professor Amanda Richdale

Megan Clark - Supervisors: Professor Cheryl Dissanayake and Dr Josephine Barbaro

Stacey Rabba - Supervisors: Professor Cheryl Dissanayake and Dr Josephine Barbaro

Rena Shrestha –Supervisors: Professor Cheryl Dissanayake and Dr Josephine Barbaro

Kitty Wan - Supervisors: Associate Professor Stephen Kent and Professor Cheryl Dissanayake

Doctor of Clinical NeuroPsychology Candidates

Peter Fanning - Supervisors: Dr Giacomo Vivanti, Dr Darren Hocking and Professor Cheryl Dissanayake

Kavi Jayasinghe - Supervisor: Professor Cheryl Dissanayake and Associate Professor Amanda Richdale



OTARC staff at the 2014 End-of-year picnic

Doctor of Clinical Psychology Candidates

Megan Grant - Supervisor: Dr Kristelle Hudry and Professor Cheryl Dissanayake

Rebecca Kam - Supervisors: Dr Kristelle Hudry and Dr Annukka Lindell

Zoe Vinen - Supervisors: Professor Cheryl Dissanayake and Dr Giacomo Vivanti

Masters of Clinical Neuropsychology/PhD

Britney Keech - Supervisors: Dr Darren Hocking and Dr Izelle Labuschagne

Master of Clinical Psychology candidates

Andrew Halim - Supervisors: Associate Professor Amanda Richdale and Dr Mirko Uljarevic

Stephanie Mertins - Supervisor: Associate Professor Amanda Richdale

Deniz Ozbilgin - Supervisors: Professor Cheryl Dissanayake and Dr Josephine Barbaro

Felicity Peel - Supervisor: Professor Cheryl Dissanayake and Dr Josephine Barbaro

Honours Candidates

Rebecca Bobin - Supervisor: Dr Darren Hocking

Lacey Chetcuti - Supervisor: Dr Kristelle Hudry & Dr Giacomo Vivanti

Natasha Kolivas - Supervisor: Professor Cheryl Dissanayake

Kate Miller - Supervisors: Associate Professor Amanda Richdale and Dr Mirco Uljarevic

Anshula Pem - Supervisors: Associate Professor Amanda Richdale and Dr Mirco Uljarevic

Successful Completions in 2014/15

Doctor of Clinical Psychology

Katherine (Kat) Crea - Longitudinal study into the mental health and emotional development in toddlers at high risk for Autism Spectrum Disorders by virtue of having an older sibling with the diagnosis. Supervisors: Dr Kristelle Hudry and Professor Cheryl Dissanayake

Nicole Porter - The impact of language exposure and executive function on the development of young children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Supervisors: Dr Kristelle Hudry and Dr Josephine Barbaro

Honours

Claire Ellul - Mapping the 2-year developmental trajectories of children attending the Victorian ASELCC. Supervisors: Professor Cheryl Dissanayake and Dr Giacomo Vivanti

Ashlee Hancock - A longitudinal follow-up on the diagnostic outcomes of children seen at La Trobe's Early Assessment Clinic for Autism Spectrum Disorders. Supervisors: Dr Kristelle Hudry and Dr Josephine Barbaro

Jackie Maya - Parental coping and acceptance of a recent ASD diagnosis in their young child. Supervisors: Dr Kristelle Hudry and Dr Josephine Barbaro

Deniz Özbilgin - The interplay between motor control and social cognitive outcomes in children with ASD. Supervisor: Dr Darren Hocking

Danielle Smith - Identifying the predictive factors of outcomes in the Early Start Denver Model 24 months post-treatment. Supervisors: Dr Giacomo Vivanti and Professor Cheryl Dissanayake

Danielle Soliman - The influence of restricted behaviours, anxiety and intolerance of uncertainty on sleep in adults with ASD. Supervisor: Associate Professor Amanda Richdale

Alexandra Woollacott - Parental bilingualism and childhood ASD: Impacts on synchrony during parent-child interaction. Supervisor: Dr Kristelle Hudry

Visiting early career researchers and Postgraduate students

We also provide the opportunity for early career researchers and postgraduate students from overseas to come and work in our Centre. Over the past year we had the pleasure of welcoming one postdoctoral fellow and two postgraduate students.



Yagmur Ozturk, PhD student, Psychological Science and Education, The University of Trento, Italy



Jeremy Marriott, Doctoral student (Clinical Psychology), Curtin University, WA



Dr Charlotte Tye, Institute of Psychiatry, Kings College, London, UK

Objective 6

Foster knowledge transfer to practitioners within the field

We have engaged in a number of activities throughout this year to transfer knowledge to practitioners in the field, and to the community in general.

ADOS Training



Guest ADOS Trainer, Dr Vicky Slonims (third from left), joined Dr Kristelle Hudry, and Junior Trainers Dr Cherie Green and Ms Emma Baker for the September 2014 ADOS training course.

As in previous years, **Dr Kristelle Hudry** taught two ADOS (Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule) training courses this year, in September 2014 and January 2015.

The ADOS is an assessment tool used for the diagnosis of ASDs. ADOS courses are for researchers and medical/allied health professionals. The demand for training has grown steadily since courses were first offered at OTARC in 2011, with waitlist numbers far exceeding course capacity. Dr Hudry has also continued to offer professional development sessions for clinicians and researchers who completed their initial ADOS training previously.

In an initiative to build capacity for ADOS training in Australia, Dr Hudry has been working with two Junior Trainers, Dr Cherie Green (previous OTARC PhD student) and Ms Emma Baker (current OTARC PhD student). Dr Green and Ms Baker already had solid experience in the use of the ADOS for clinical/research assessments prior to starting their training.

For the September course Dr Hudry invited Dr Vicky Slonims, Consultant Speech and Language Therapist from Guys' and St Thomas' Hospital in London, and international ADOS trainer, to co-facilitate the training. Her presence provided the opportunity for the Junior Trainers to benefit from her extensive experience with ASD diagnostic assessments.

Invited Talks and Workshops

12 July 2014

Glen Eira Stonnington District Scout Leaders, Melbourne
Professor Cheryl Dissanayake.
Autism Spectrum Disorders.

30 July 2014

The Melbourne Clinic, Richmond, Melbourne
Professor Cheryl Dissanayake.
Research at OTARC: Where are we in 2014?

5 August 2014

Masterclass 'Pathways to Consciousness' sponsored by La Trobe University, School of Psychological Science in conjunction with the Research Focus Areas
Dr Kristelle Hudry, Dr Heather Nuske, Dr Darren Hocking, and post-graduate student Ms Gemma Lamp
Understanding Disease and Building Healthy Communities

5 August 2014

CYMHS ASD Statewide Coordinators meeting, Mindful, Melbourne
Professor Cheryl Dissanayake
Research at OTARC: Where are we in 2014?

27 November 2014

Victorian Child & Youth Mental Health Services for ASD State Coordinators at Travencore
Associate Professor Amanda Richdale.
Research on transition to tertiary education for for DHS and research within the Autism CRC and OTARC.

21 March 2015

The Rotary Conference, Wangaratta
Professor Cheryl Dissanayake
Research at the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre.

10 April 2015

Capital Institute of Pediatrics, Beijing, China
Dr Giacomo Vivanti.
Early Intervention in Autism Spectrum Disorders.



Dr Giacomo Vivanti's at the Li Qiao Hospital of Capital Institute of Pediatrics in China

23 June 2015

CoAct Conference, Old Parliament House, Canberra
Wojciech Nadachowski co-presented at two panel sessions:
"The Power of Many"

- *"The Dandelion Program"* with Michael Fieldhouse, HP Australia, and Mitch Levy, Department of Human Services.
- *"Focus on Ability"* with Graeme Innes AM, Disability Discrimination Commissioner 2005-2014 and Caroline Casey, Kanchi Network, Ireland.

Other Initiatives



Appointments

Professor Cheryl Dissanayake

- Editorial Boards of the Australian Educational and Developmental Psychologist and Frontiers in Developmental Psychology
- Executive Committee of the Australasian Society for Autism Research (ASfAR), Vice President
- Convenor of the ASD Research Group in Victoria
- NDIA Autism Early Intervention Stakeholder Panel
- Research and Developmental Committee, CRC for Living with Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Biobank Operations Committee, CRC for Living with Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Scientific Advisory Board, Raising Children's Network
- Clinical Evaluation Group of the National Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centres

Associate Professor Amanda Richdale

- Chair of the EPIC Early Intervention Board of Management
- APS Intellectual &/or Developmental Disabilities and Psychology Interest Group
- ASD Transition to Tertiary Studies Advisory Committee formed around the development of a resource to support people with ASD to transition to tertiary study (out of UTAS), funded by the NDCO Special Projects Funding from the Commonwealth Department of Education

Dr Giacomo Vivanti

- Editorial Boards of the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, Autismo e Disturbi dello Sviluppo (Italian journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders), Disabilita' e Disturbi dello Sviluppo (Disability and Developmental Disorders)
- Scientific consultant, Italian National Research Council
- Scientific Consultant, Italian Department of Health Committee to establish the Italian Guidelines on ASD Diagnosis and Treatment
- Scientific Consultant, Autism Europe International Association for the Advancements of Rights of Persons with Autism
- Scientific Consultant, Neuro-Engineering Group, University of Pisa, Italy
- Scientific Consultant, Stella Maris Scientific Institute, University of Pisa, project on early diagnosis and predictors of treatment outcomes in the Tuscany region, Italy

Dr Josephine Barbaro

- Board of Directors of the Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Foundation Limited
- Secretary of the Menzies Memorial Scholars' Association

Dr Kristelle Hudry

- Assistant Chair on a Grant Review Panel for the NHMRC Project Grants funding scheme

8 October 2014

Have Your Say Adult Forum

Researchers from the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre, with the help and support from AMAZE, Aspergers Victoria and Alpha Autism, organized a forum as part of a wider research program with the aim of finding out more about the well-being of adolescents and adults with ASD and their families. The event was moderated by Tom Gleisner, Australian writer, comedian and producer.

The program of the forum included a presentation by Associate Professor Amanda Richdale in which she described the results of a survey about educational and employment experiences with ASD. Further presentations were given by an adult with autism and a parent of an adult with autism, in which they described their experiences with independent living and outlined their perception of research needs.

This was followed by a panel discussion on the same issues in which three parents/carers, three adults with ASD and one service provider participated.

2 April 2015

WAAD

For 2015 World Autism Awareness Month OTARC screened AMAZE's short film 'Spectrospectrum' on the La Trobe Bundoora campus to raise awareness among staff and students.

Early Assessment Clinic for Autism Spectrum Disorders

By Dr Nancy Sadka, Intake Officer, Early Assessment Clinic

Since it opened, we have seen over 260 children under age 3 years at our Early Assessment Clinic. This financial year we were able to see 65 children despite having had to cut back this service to one day a week due to reducing financial support and available resources. However, demand for this service remains strong.

We have a new Speech Pathologist, Ms Veronica Rose, working at the clinic alongside Dr Nusrat Ahmed. Dr Nancy Sadka, our Intake Officer, takes time to talk with every family we see, and oversees all administrative aspects of the clinic. The majority of families are referred to the EAC by Pediatricians, with the remainder equally referred by Allied Health Professionals, General Practitioners and Maternal and Child Health Nurses. To date, 75% of children seen receive a diagnosis of ASD, with the remainder having either a language and/or developmental delay. Seventy six percent (76%) of referred boys and 63% of referred girls meet criteria for an ASD. The average age of children diagnosed with ASD continues to be 27 months (range 12 – 35 months). We are currently undertaking a follow-up study of the children we have seen at the EAC at preschool age (4 years) to chart their developmental trajectories and to ascertain stability of their ASD diagnosis.

Victorian Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre (The Margot Prior Wing)

By Mr Ed Duncan, Speech and Language Therapist and Senior Coordinator of the Margot Prior Wing

The Victorian Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre (ASELCC) continued to work strategically over the last 12 months to ensure that the service provided high quality care and intervention to young children with ASD, building on its active research agenda. The team also support the sector by training professionals in Australia and overseas on the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM).

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has announced an extension to the ASELCC funding (for all six centres) for the next three years. We look forward to continuing to build on our operational strategic agenda over the next three years as we prepare for the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The ASELCC's relationship with OTARC continues to form the cornerstone of the service's research agenda and highlights the services broader relevance and value. We remain very committed to (and excited about) the social participation study whereby we are comparing outcomes of children with ASD who are receiving ESDM within autism specific playrooms to other children who are receiving the ESDM within inclusive early childhood playrooms. The final results of this study will be available at the end of the year and we plan on having this published in the first quarter of 2016.

Our ESDM trainers have been very active over the last 12 months and have provided training in Melbourne, Perth, Japan, and France. To continue to build on our expertise in the application of the ESDM, the Centre has supported staff to travel to the University of California to be trained in specialist parent coaching. While there, Professor Sally Rogers (co-founder of the ESDM) has recognised the work of our team



and requested that La Trobe University become the first ESDM training site outside of the US. We are very excited to be recognised as such, and look forward to continuing to disseminate the ESDM to parents and professionals within the early childhood sector. If you are interested in finding out more about ESDM training or our direct ESDM services for infants, toddlers or pre-schoolers with ASD, please contact us here at the Centre (email autismtraining@latrobe.edu.au or autismplaymates@latrobe.edu.au).

Raising Children Network

OTARC staff continue to work with colleagues from the Parenting Research Centre to create, write and review content for the Raising Children Network - Autism site. Working together, we can ensure that the relevant information is up-to-date, evidence-based, and of a high standard.



Play Connect

OTARC have continued a partnership for evaluation of the Play Connect playgroup program – part of the federally funded Helping Children With Autism Initiative.

OTARC Operations & Projects

By Wojciech Nadachowski, Senior Advisor, Operations & Projects

As OTARC continues to expand its range of research activities, the Operations and Administration team support these accomplishments. Many no doubt consider administration as perfunctory and sober, but our team's list of developments and achievements are very exciting, many of which utilize technology to solve problems and transform capabilities. Our achievements include:

- being listed on Apple's iTunes U Best of 2014 podcast compilations;
- developing a new mobile application to assist parents in the early detection of autism;
- implementing an efficient reporting regime for our CRC Projects;
- supporting the surveillance of 14,000 children within the Victorian Maternal and Child Health system;
- management of the Department of Social Services' Child and Family Outcomes Strategy national database.

I have also had the opportunity to take a lead role on two important projects. Having worked at Alpha Autism in programs supporting adults on the Spectrum, I have seen firsthand the lack of opportunities available to many of them. The opportunity to help establish the research program with HP Australia, Australian Department of Human Services, and Specialisterne has brought much satisfaction and hope for the future.

The second project has involved securing support from

Salesforce to develop our early identification mobile app. The Salesforce Foundation encourages employees to volunteer 6 days annually, and staff in Melbourne, Sydney, Singapore, Atlanta and San Francisco have formed a team to build the app without cost. So far, they have each volunteered more than six days to this exciting project!

OTARC's successes depend on work with business units at La Trobe and we have continued our close relationship with Digital Marketing, Research Services, Innovation & Commercialisation, Advancement & Alumni, the College of SHE and Digital Learning. These units are staffed with highly professional individuals whose collegiality and giving spirit means OTARC is able to amplify our efforts.

OTARC Laboratory Report

By Carmela Germano, Laboratory Manager

In March 2015, the OTARC Laboratory welcomed Alex Aulich, who works closely with me to support the research activities undertaken by OTARC research staff and students. We are continuing to utilise the Lab space to its fullest capacity with each of the five testing rooms regularly booked for assessments and experiments. In the last year, approximately 470 research participants and their families attended the OTARC lab. Many more participated in questionnaire studies, so that the total number of participants involved in our studies was almost 1,900.

The OTARC Research Participant Registry has 1817 registrants with numbers increasing every year as researchers recruit participants for their studies and enlist them (with their permission) into the Registry. These individuals and families are matched as potential participants to relevant research studies. We are very grateful to all participants for their generous time and support, and for trusting us with their sensitive information. Protecting their privacy is a key focus within the lab.

The OTARC Laboratory Manual has recently been updated to continue to provide researchers and students with detailed information to streamline processes within the OTARC Lab and to better accommodate the individuals and families who participate in our research. Amendments to the Laboratory Manual are made on a regular basis.

Last but not least, the OTARC Lab has received wonderful support from our volunteers over the last year, in particular, Daniel Berends, Danielle Smith, Claire Ellul, Jackie Maya, and Aleshia Nanev have all made substantial contributions to our work.

Lab Meetings

| | |
|--|--|
| July 11, 2014 Topic: Data collection Facilitators: Amanda Richdale and Carmela Germano | March 13, 2015 Topic: Ethics Applications, Budgets, and related documentation Facilitator: Megan Clark |
| August 1, 2014 Topic: Data entry and data analyses Facilitators: Carmela Germano Followed by 'Expectations of Research' with Giacomo Vivanti | April 10, 2015 Topic: Research Proposal and/or Literature Review Facilitator: Megan Clark and Carmela Germano |
| September 5, 2014 Topic: Write up (Theses, Chapters, Papers) Facilitators: Cheryl Dissanayake and Giacomo Vivanti Followed by 'Expectations of Research' with Giacomo Vivanti | May 29, 2015 Topic: Tips for surviving the hell that is Psychology Honours and first year Postgraduate studies Facilitators: Peter Fanning and Zoe Vinen |
| October 3, 2014 Topic: How to present your research Facilitators: Josephine Barbaro and Darren Hocking Followed by 'Expectations of Research' with Giacomo Vivanti | June 19, 2015 Topic: Participant Recruitment (and Salesforce Study Management tips) Facilitators: Emma Baker and Megan Grant |
| November 7, 2014 Topic: Preparing your CV (Academic and/or Clinical): Skills learned during your Honours study Facilitators: Elfriede Ihlen | |

The Financial Report of the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre

Preamble

Changes in La Trobe University's financial systems in the first half of 2015 have prompted a change in accounting policies, making it important to align OTARC's financial reporting to the University's general financial reporting structures.

Given that the University operates on a calendar year, OTARC's financial procedures will do so as well from this year. The reason OTARC has reported by financial year to date was that OTARC was inaugurated in late June 2008 and the subsequent financial reports have been a legacy of that date.

In order to enact these changes, OTARC will report on the 2014 calendar year only in this year's financial report. We will henceforth report on the calendar year in forthcoming reports as well.

| Revenues: For the period 1st January to 31st December 2014 | | |
|---|--|-----------------------|
| Commonwealth Grants - DEEWR | | \$17,362.00 |
| State Government Grants | | 0 |
| Research Revenue | | \$1,039,638.00 |
| Commercial Revenue | | \$97,648.00 |
| Other Grants and Donations | * \$500K donation under research revenue | \$89,287.00 |
| Other Revenue | | \$25,917 |
| Internal Revenue/ Transfers | | \$1,044.00 |
| Investment Revenue | Interest on monies held | \$58,467.93 |
| Total Revenue | | \$1,329,363.93 |

The Financial Report of the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre

| Expenditure: For the period 1st January to 31st December 2014 | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Total Employee Benefits and on costs | | \$1,275,563.71 |
| Academic | | \$716,117.18 |
| Casual - Academic | | \$244,514.55 |
| General | | \$218,475.37 |
| Casual - General | | \$129,552.00 |
| Other salary related | | -\$33,095.39 |
| Total Non Salary Expenditure | | \$226,097.75 |
| Infrastructure Related | Maintenance, services | \$34,814.97 |
| Depreciation | | \$11,546.06 |
| Professional Fees | Consultancies, etc | \$7,378.41 |
| Student Related | Scholarships, Stipends, Training | \$27,760.20 |
| General Operating | General Admin Costs | \$55,878.70 |
| Staff related | Travel, Accommodation, Entertainment | \$54,333.83 |
| Other Expenses & Sundry Items | | \$34,385.58 |
| Total Expenses | | \$1,501,661.46 |
| Net Operating Result | | -\$172,297.53 |

Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre Balance

as at 31st December 2014 - Reported in Cost Centre 9105

| | | |
|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| LTU Foundation | (Fund 105831) | \$624,701.30 |
| OTARC | (Fund 107159) | \$660,014.14 |

Consolidated Balance \$1,284,715.00

Staffing and Centre Personnel

Academic and Research Staff

Professor Cheryl Dissanayake, Director
Associate Professor Amanda Richdale, Principal Research Fellow
Dr Josephine Barbaro, Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Dr Darren Hedley, HP Research Fellow
Dr Darren Hocking, Research Fellow
Dr Kristelle Hudry, Senior Lecturer in Developmental Psychology, School of Psychology and Public Health
Dr Elfriede Ihsen, Research Fellow
Ms Melanie Muniandy, BIOBANK Research Officer
Dr Heather Nuske, CRC Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Dr Mirko Uljarevic, CRC Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Dr Giacomo Vivanti, Research Fellow, ASELCC/OTARC
Dr Nusrat Yasmeen Ahmed, ASD Specialist, Early Assessment Clinic, ASELCC & Director of the Hope Autism Center in Bangladesh.
Ms Veronica Rose, Speech Pathologist, Early Assessment Clinic

Administrative staff

Mr Wojciech Nadachowski, Senior Advisor, Operations & Projects
Ms Lisbeth Wilks, Administrative Officer
Ms Carmela Germano, Laboratory Manager
Dr Nancy Sadka, Intake Officer, OTARC Early Assessment Clinic
Ms Alexandra Aulich, Administrative Officer
Mr Lachlan Burnside, Database Officer
Mr Peter Johansen, Administrative Assistant

Research Assistants

Anna Atkinson
Molly Buntine
Ashlee Hancock
Jackie Maya
Yessica Monroy-Moreno
Lindsay Pamment
Stacey Rabba

Adjunct members

Dr Naomi Bishop, Lecturer, School of Life Sciences, La Trobe University.
Dr Philippe Chouinard, Lecturer, School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University.
Dr Matthew Hale, Lecturer, School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University.
Dr Yuan Gao, Independent Consultant, Beijing, China.
Dr Oriane Landry, Adjunct Associate Professor, School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University
Dr Lesley Stirling, Associate Professor, School of Language and Linguistics, University of Melbourne.
Dr David Trembath, Senior Lecturer, Griffith University.
Dr Cynthia Zierhut, MIND Institute, University of California, Davis in Sacramento, USA.

Honorary members

Amanda Golding, Amagol Consulting Services & Autism Noticeboard
Mike Burnside, Principal Sales Engineer at Salesforce.com

New Staff Members

We welcomed two new staff members in the last year - Ms Alex Aulich and Dr Darren Hedley. Alex assists with many projects including administration of ADOS training courses, CRC business, as well as providing support to many of our staff and students. She also curates our annual exhibition 'Frame of Mind'. Darren is the Research Fellow working on the Dandelion Project. His other research interests include face recognition and emotion processing in individuals with ASDs, early assessment and diagnosis, and confidence-accuracy calibration in diagnostic decision-making.



Dr Darren Hedley



Alex Aulich

Governance - Advisory Committee



Professor Margot Prior (Chair), Adjunct Professor at La Trobe University, University of Melbourne University, and Royal Children's Hospital

Professor Cheryl Dissanayake, Centre Director, La Trobe University

Ms Emma Baker, PhD candidate, Student representative for OTARC, La Trobe University

Professor Keith Nugent, DVC Research, La Trobe University

Professor Graham Schaffer, PVC, College of Science, Health and Engineering, La Trobe University

Dr Alan Watkinson, Director of Alumni and Advancement, La Trobe University

Professor Teresa Iacono, Head of Rural Health School, La Trobe University

Professor David Finlay, Chair University Human Ethics Committee & Director, La Trobe University

Dr Sylvia Walton, Chair ASELCC Strategic Advisory Committee, La Trobe University

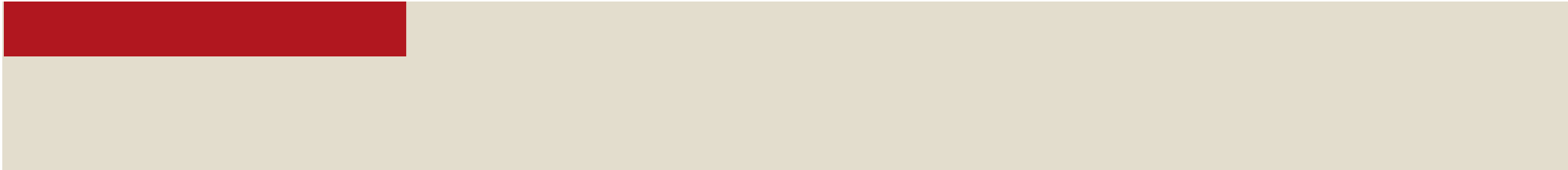
Mr Clifford Picton, University Ombudsman, La Trobe University

Mr Tony Stein, Parent

Ms Lia Castorini, AMAZE (2014)

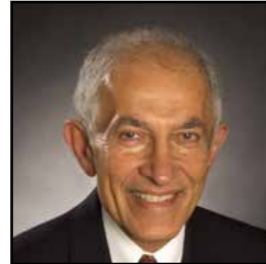
Ms Fiona Sharkie, CEO, AMAZE (2015)

Dr Catherine Marraffa, Senior Paediatrician Developmental Medicine, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne



The Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre (OTARC) was initially established in 2008 as a joint initiative of La Trobe University and Autism Victoria. This was made possible with a private donation by Mrs Olga Tennison in 2007. The Centre is named after her to acknowledge her generosity.

Our mission within the Centre is to advance knowledge of the nature and causes of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs), as well as to develop and study evidence-based strategies for supporting children and families affected by an ASD.



Our Patron is Professor David De Kretser (AC, AO, MD 1969, HonLLD 2006) Monash University. Professor Kretser was Governor of Victoria from 2006-2011.



OTARC is situated in the School of Psychology and Public Health within the College of Science, Health and Engineering (CSHE) at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia.

