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

You will read about many new initiatives over the last year, with one of the most exciting being a collaboration with the University of Illinois (UI) and the Danish company Specialisterne. Specialisterne was formed in Denmark in 2008 to train adults with Asperger’s Syndrome to work together towards a common goal. They have been working with adults with autism for 7 years and have established several centres in Denmark. Prior to this exciting project, we had not had a real research project underway at OTARC. Dr Darren Hedley has joined us as a Research Fellow on this exciting project. Thus our research program has gathered speed, especially given the Autism CRC projects on adults with ASD, a much under-researched area, is slowly gathering speed, especially given the Autism CRC project on anxiety disorders in ASD at OTARC, with its Australian trainers co-located with HP Australia, and the Danish company Specialisterne and HP employing them to undertake software testing within the Australian and Danish markets. The results of the randomized controlled trial led by Dr. Richdale and Dr. Mirko Uljarević and underway at the Victorian ASELCC, will inform the feasibility and delivery of an autism specific intervention for young adults with ASD.

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.

We have also had a number of new initiatives over the last year. One of our ex PhD students, Dr Heather Nuske (currently an Autism CRC post-doctoral scholar with us) was awarded a competitive VicsTech Fellowship in the Life Sciences. OTARC was also awarded one of the first National Disability Insurance Agency research grants to investigate the outcomes amongst adults with ASD. The ‘ Cannell Project’ proposes these adults play a vital role, with us employing them to undertake software testing within the Australian and Danish markets. Department of Human Services. In addition to research, the Specialisation Centre Australia has been established at La Trobe University, with its Australian trainers co-located with HP Australia, and the Danish company Specialisterne. The ‘Shaping Futures’ the inaugural Autism CRC Scholars Event, was 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鳌nd the Early Diagnostic Clinic.

You will read here about many new initiatives over the 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 researchers and practitioners in autism research and practice. Some of these included the First Biennial ASFAR Conference, the Second Biennial ASFAR Conference, the World Autism Awareness Day 2015, Have Your Say Forum, Invited Talks and Workshops, ADOS Training, and the Eye Tracking Workshop – all during the 2nd conference of the Australasian Society for Autism Research (ASAF), which took place over two-and-a-half days in Melbourne in November.

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We thank the Menzies Foundation for their support of this symposium. Dr Josephine Barbaro, and attended the ASfAR Conference in December 2014 with a generous sponsorship from the Menzies Foundation. It was chaired by the ASFAR Executive (Professors Katrina Williams and Cheryl Dissanayake) and featured Professor Sue Leekam and her Post Doctoral Fellow, Dr Georgina Powell, as well as one of our own research fellows. Heather Nuske. The forum speakers: Dr Giacomo Vivanti, Professor Sue Leekam, Dr Georgina Powell and Dr Heather Nuske.

The MOU will co-locate SPF’s trainers with OTARC, giving the trainers access to latest research outcomes on successful employment for people with ASD. The findings will help shape future work opportunities for people with ASD, their families, co-workers and employers. The MOU was signed by HP Australia and La Trobe University with Thorkil Sonne, Specialist People Founder, and La Trobe and Specialisterne have also signed a Memorandum Of Understanding to co-locate SPF’s trainers with OTARC, giving the trainers access to latest research outcomes on successful employment for people with ASD.

The standard of presentations was very high, especially amongst the many students who presented their work. This is true for your Future Research Training Centre’s inaugural forum, and held at La Trobe University in December 2014, attracted international researchers presenting keynote addresses: Professor Cathy Lord (Director of the Center for Autism and Developmental Medicine, Columbia University), Professor Andy Schumann (Chair of Autism and Director of the Vancouver Autism Research Centre). The conference was free to AASoAR members, and ASCEND and AAMU kindly paid for the lunches and the Autism CRC provided the two morning teas. A number of abstracts were also presented during a poster session. The amount of work being done in the area of autism is very great, and we are very grateful for their support.

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The 2014/2015 Annual Report of the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre

1. Menzies Foundation Symposium on Shaping Futures: Early Identification, Diagnosis and Early Intervention for ASDs

This symposium was organized by OTARC in association with the AASoAR in December 2014 with a generous sponsorship of OTARC’s Menzies Scholar Dr Josephine Barbaro, and attended by about 350 professors, professionals and researchers, included speakers: Professor Cathy Lord (Centre for the Developing Mind, Cornell University), Dr Andy Schumann (Australian Scholar), Associate Professor Robyn Young (Flinders University) as well as 200 local and international delegates, with three high-profile international researchers presenting keynote addresses: Professor Cathy Lord (Director of the Center for Autism and Developmental Medicine, Columbia University), Professor Andy Schumann (Chair of Autism and Director of the Vancouver Autism Research Center). The conference was free to AASoAR members, and ASCEND and AAMU kindly paid for the lunches and the Autism CRC provided the two morning teas. A number of abstracts were also presented during a poster session. The amount of work being done in the area of autism is very great, and we are very grateful for their support.

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

This conference, convened by Professor Cathy Lord, was held at La Trobe University in December 2014, attracted attention from international delegates, and high profile international researchers presenting keynote addresses: Professor Cathy Lord (Director of the Center for Autism and Developmental Medicine, Columbia University), Professor Andy Schumann (Chair of Autism and Director of the Vancouver Autism Research Center). The conference was free to AASoAR members, and ASCEND and AAMU kindly paid for the lunches and the Autism CRC provided the two morning teas. A number of abstracts were also presented during a poster session. The amount of work being done in the area of autism is very great, and we are very grateful for their support.

3. New Direction in Eye Tracking Forum

The New Directions in Eye Tracking forum was co-hosted by OTARC and the Sydney Psychology Unit, Centre for Research in Child Development (CRCD). It is held in December 2014 as well as GPSA’s and research forum that was hosted in June 2015, and was attended by over 200 local and international participants. The forum was organized by OTARC and the Wales Autism Research Centre. It took place in December 2014 and featured Professor Sue Leekam and her Post Doctoral Fellow, Dr Georgina Powell, and held at La Trobe University. The forum was organized by OTARC and the Wales Autism Research Centre. It took place in December 2014 and featured Professor Sue Leekam and her Post Doctoral Fellow, Dr Georgina Powell, and held at La Trobe University.

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 research the employment outcomes amongst adults with ASD. It is led by Professor Cathy Lord (Director of the Center for Autism and Developmental Medicine, Columbia University), and Helen Duggan (Chair of Autism and Director of the Vancouver Autism Research Center). The conference was free to AASoAR members, and ASCEND and AAMU kindly paid for the lunches and the Autism CRC provided the two morning teas. A number of abstracts were also presented during a poster session. The amount of work being done in the area of autism is very great, and we are very grateful for their support.

5. Frame of Mind Exhibition: THE FIGURE AND BEYOND

Writer’s Block Café, La Trobe University - April-May 2015

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Dr Heather Nuske was assisted a VESKI Victoria Fellowship in Life Sciences in 2014. This prestigious award recognizes and understands the outstanding contribution of Victoria residents in the life sciences and enables them to undertake an international study tour with the aim of developing their experience and expanding international networks. Heather created the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development (C3B) in Melbourne College. University of Melbourne looks for candidates from the PhD cohort in the life sciences and enables them to undertake an international study tour with the aim of developing their experience and expanding international networks. Heather created the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development (C3B) in Melbourne College. University of Melbourne looks for candidates from the PhD cohort in the life sciences and enables them to undertake an international study tour with the aim of developing their experience and expanding international networks.
OTARC continues to undertake a range of research studies that span the developmental period from infancy through to adolescence and adulthood, with a number of high-level research 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 Case Project 1 Team

2. Social Attention and Communication Study-Related (SACS-R).
   Researchers: Josephine Barbaro, Latrell Gill (School of Nursing and Midwifery, La Trobe University), Cheryl Dissanayake

Our Objectives and Achievements

Objective 1

Facilitate large and/orongoing research projects

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

   Researchers: Cathy Bent, Cheryl Dissanayake & Josephine Barbaro

3. Reducing the age of diagnosis of ASD in Nepal: SACS-N.
   Researchers: Rena Shrestra, Cheryl Dissanayake & Josephine Barbaro

4. 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

5. 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

6. Social attention and communication surveillance 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)

   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)

8. Approach and withdrawal in toddlers with ASD and developmental delays.
   Researchers: Darren Hedley, Prof James A Mulick (Ohio State University) & Rose Nevill (Ohio State University & Nisonger Center, Columbus Ohio)

   Researchers: Beth McGovern-Goray, Amanda Darcy, Josephine Barbaro & Jackie Howse (Southern Cross University)

10. Universal surveillance and early identification of developmental disorders.
    Researchers: Volkanos Papageorgiou (University of New South Wales), Kathryn Williams (Royal Children's Hospital, Department of Developmental Medicine), Beth McGovern-Goray, Josephine Barbaro & Sue Woodham (Sydney Children's Hospital Network)
Research Theme 2: Behavioural, motor and cognitive development
Currently, OTARC is involved in studies of developmental processes as well as studies of children from different populations of children (Fragile X Syndrome, Williams Syndrome, and Down Syndrome). Our longitudinal studies illustrate the impact of early developmental processes on later educational and cognitive outcomes. This area also encompasses studies of intellectual disability in children with ASD.

A recent and important finding is a longitudinal study of children diagnosed with ASD at age 2 year-olds. Researchers: Darren Hocking, Judy Barbaro, Melissa Potter (all Nationwide Children’s Hospital and Ohio State University, Columbus Ohio).

In this study of 50% of children with autism, 24% of the school-aged children had an IQ < 70 at school age (compared to 64% at 2-years of age). Researchers: Megan Clark is the reduction in the percentage of children and developmental delay. Researchers: Matthew Hale (School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University), John Lesku (School of Life Sciences, La Trobe University), Teresa Locurto (La Trobe University), Giacomo Vivanti (School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University), Cheryl Dissanayake, Lesley Bretherton, Nusrat Ahmed & Minh Bui (University of Melbourne).

2. School-age outcomes of children with ASD diagnosed at age 2 years. Researchers: Megan Clark, Cheryl Dissanayake & Giacomo Vivanti

3. School-age outcomes of children with ASD diagnosed at age 2 years. Researchers: Megan Clark, Cheryl Dissanayake & Josephine Barbaro


5. Neurodevelopmental profiles of toddlers with ASD and developmental delay. Researchers: Connor Hedley, Rose Nevid (Ohio State University) & Jennifer Williams (Macquarie University).

6. School-age outcomes of children with ASD who received their Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) intervention in a home-based setting. Researchers: Stacey Rabba, Cheryl Dissanayake & Josephine Barbaro

7. Investigation of the genetic and environmental causes of autism and screened autism in children with autism. Researchers: Susan Douglas (University of Melbourne), Lisa Yirung (University of Melbourne), Cheryl Dissanayake & Giacomo Vivanti

8. Social learning and imitation in children with ASD. Researchers: Andrew Richards, Greg Butter, James A Mulick (all Nationwide Children’s Hospital and Ohio State University, Columbus Ohio).

9. Social learning processes and later intellectual outcomes in typical development, we are also involved in studies modelling features of ASD aimed at understanding the genetic pathways involved in ASD. Current Studies

1. A comparison of two different referral systems. Researchers: Giacomo Vivanti & Cheryl Dissanayake

2. Comparing family wellbeing in families whose children were diagnosed in toddlerhood vs two different referral systems. Researchers: Giacomo Vivanti & Cheryl Dissanayake

3. An exploratory study of the impact of autism symptoms on parenting. Researchers: Natasha Kolobe, Lindsay Pinnock, Amanda Richdale & Cheryl Dissanayake

4. Cortisol and Oxytocin in young children with ASD. Researchers: Kitty Ying Wan, Stephen Kent (La Trobe University), Giacomo Vivanti & Cheryl Dissanayake

5. The role of executive social and cognitive deficits in young adults with autism, Williams syndrome and social anxiety disorder. Researchers: Daniel Hocking, Giacomo Vivanti, Megan Grant, Ru Ying Cai & Cheryl Dissanayake

6. Prenatal and early postnatal risk factors in autism. Researchers: Andrew Whitehouse (Telethon Kids Institute, University of Western Australia), Munro Milroy (University of Western Australia), Cheryl Dissanayake, Valsamma Butter, James A Mulick (all Nationwide Children’s Hospital and Ohio State University, Columbus Ohio).

7. Hormonal effects on the brain and developmental delay. Researchers: David Amor (Murdoch Children Research Institute), Ingrid Williams (University of Western Australia), Cheryl Dissanayake, Martha Hickey (Royal Children’s Hospital, Melbourne) & Rebecca Davis (University of Western Australia)

8. Prenatal and early postnatal risk factors in autism. Researchers: Andrew Whitehouse (Telethon Kids Institute, University of Western Australia), Munro Milroy (University of Western Australia), Cheryl Dissanayake, Valsamma Butter, James A Mulick (all Nationwide Children’s Hospital and Ohio State University, Columbus Ohio).

9. Cortisol and Oxytocin in young children with ASD. Researchers: Kitty Ying Wan, Stephen Kent (La Trobe University), Giacomo Vivanti & Cheryl Dissanayake

10. The role of executive social and cognitive deficits in young adults with autism, Williams syndrome and social anxiety disorder. Researchers: Daniel Hocking, Giacomo Vivanti, Megan Grant, Ru Ying Cai & Cheryl Dissanayake

11. Cortisol and Oxytocin in young children with ASD. Researchers: Kitty Ying Wan, Stephen Kent (La Trobe University), Giacomo Vivanti & Cheryl Dissanayake

12. Prenatal and early postnatal risk factors in autism. Researchers: Andrew Whitehouse (Telethon Kids Institute, University of Western Australia), Munro Milroy (University of Western Australia), Cheryl Dissanayake, Valsamma Butter, James A Mulick (all Nationwide Children’s Hospital and Ohio State University, Columbus Ohio).

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

1. Early child cognitive and/or social outcome. Researchers: Darren Hocking, Cheryl Dissanayake & Giacomo Vivanti

2. School-age outcomes of children with an IQ < 70 at school age (compared to 64% at 2-years of age). Researchers: Megan Clark is the reduction in the percentage of children

3. School-age outcomes of children with ASD who received their Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) intervention in a home-based setting. Researchers: Stacey Rabba, Cheryl Dissanayake & Josephine Barbaro

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Research Theme 4: Focus on families

1. Evaluating Australian community-based support for families with young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Researchers: Valesma Butter, Cheryl Dissanayake, Peter Sluyter (La Trobe University, School of Economics), Meghna Nadabale, Giacomo Vivanti, Megan Grant, Ru Ying Cai & Jackie Moyo


3. An exploratory study of the impact of autism symptoms on parenting. Researchers: Natasha Kolobe, Lindsay Pinnock, Amanda Richdale & Cheryl Dissanayake

4. School-age outcomes of children with ASD who received their Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) intervention in a home-based setting. Researchers: Stacey Rabba, Cheryl Dissanayake & Josephine Barbaro

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

1. Early learning and intellectual development in autism; Researchers: Giacomo Vivanti & Cheryl Dissanayake

2. School-age outcomes of children with ASD who received their Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) intervention in a home-based setting. Researchers: Stacey Rabba, Cheryl Dissanayake & Josephine Barbaro

3. An exploratory study of the impact of autism symptoms on parenting. Researchers: Natasha Kolobe, Lindsay Pinnock, Amanda Richdale & Cheryl Dissanayake
Research Theme 6: Related conditions: Sleep and other difficulties

Current Studies

1. Predictors of anxiety in young children and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder
Researchers: Andrew Halim, Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

2. Does circadian rhythm disruption play a role in sleep disturbances in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder?
Researchers: Emma Baker, Amanda Richdale & Agnes Hazi

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

Researchers: Danielle Soliman & Amanda Richdale

5. Investigation of biomarkers, gut, sleep and autonomic dysfunction in adults with high-functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder
Researchers: Giacomo Vivanti, Cheryl Dissanayake & David Trembath

6. Longitudinal study of adults with ASD.
Researchers: Anshula Pem, Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

7. 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

8. Factors Affecting Sleep in School Leavers with Autism Spectrum Disorder
Researchers: Kate Miller, Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

9. Anxiety in school leavers: The role of intolerance of Uncertainty, worry, ASD traits and repetitive behaviours.
Researchers: Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

10. Reduced sleep quality in adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder: the role of diet symptoms in typically developing and Autism Spectrum Disorder children in Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and Bangladesh.
Researchers: Danielle Soliman & Amanda Richdale

Current Projects

1. Finding a place in the workplace and in the community: Developing and testing of an Educational Workplace Assessment Protocol (EWAP) and an integrated Employment Success Tool (EST).
Researchers: Tapolz Fahmer (Curtin University), Julian Trollor (The University of New South Wales), Nick Leonis (The University of Queensland), Cheryl Dissanayake

Researchers: Ru Ying Cai, Amanda Richdale & Cheryl Dissanayake

3. Health and Wellbeing for Adults.
Researchers: Nick Lennox (The University of Queensland), Julian Trollor (University of New South Wales), Tapolz Fahmer (Curtin University), Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

4. 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.
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Researchers: Tapolz Fahmer (Curtin University), Julian Trollor (The University of New South Wales), Nick Leonis (The University of Queensland), Cheryl Dissanayake

7. Optimising recruitment and retention for longitudinal research.
Researchers: Debra Costley (Aspect NSW), Trevor Clarke (Aspect NSW), Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

8. Longitudinal study of adults with ASD.
Researchers: Anshula Pem, Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

Researchers: Kate Miller, Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

10. Anxiety in school leavers: The role of intolerance of Uncertainty, worry, ASD traits and repetitive behaviours.
Researchers: Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

Research Theme 7: Success in Adulthood

Current Studies

1. Successful employment outcomes for people with ASD.
Researchers: Debra Costley (Aspect NSW), Amanda Richdale & Mirko Uljarevic

2. Comprehensive and unique profile of Australian school leavers with ASD.
Researchers: Amanda Richdale, Ru Ying Cai & Mirko Uljarevic, Tapolz Fahmer (Curtin University), Nick Leonis (The University of Queensland), Julian Trollor (The University of Queensland), Cheryl Dissanayake

3. The influence of anxiety, repetitive behaviours and intolerance of uncertainty.
Researchers: Danielle Soliman & Amanda Richdale

4. Finding a place in the workplace and in the community: Developing and testing of an Educational Workplace Assessment Protocol (EWAP) and an integrated Employment Success Tool (EST).
Researchers: Tapolz Fahmer (Curtin University), Julian Trollor (The University of New South Wales), Nick Leonis (The University of Queensland), Cheryl Dissanayake

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Hudry K., Grant, M., Bedford, R., Pasco, G., Slonims, V., Elsabbagh, M., Mercure, M., Chandler, S., Pasco, G., Green, J., Elsabbagh, M., Johnson, M.H., Charman, T. 


Conference Presentations

Keynote Panel Session: Social Learning Processes Understanding the Treatment of Related Change in Children with ASD: Moving the Field

Oral Presentations


Barbaro, J. & Dissanayake, C. – Early ASD surveillance and following: neurodevelopmental assessment and outcomes. – Project 1.005RC. – Project 3.016RC.


National Health and Medical Research Council Linkage Projects Scheme (2013-2016) – Enhancing learning capacity and academic outcomes in neurodevelopmental disorders – Project 1.005RC. – Project 3.016RC.

The NAP and its Veterans’ Health and Mental Health Conference (2013-2014) – Enhancing learning capacity and academic outcomes in neurodevelopmental disorders – Project 1.005RC. – Project 3.016RC.

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The William and Vera Houston Memorial Trust (2013-2014) – Project 3.012RC. – Project 1.022RC.

Health and Medical Research Council (2014) – Enhancing learning capacity and academic outcomes in neurodevelopmental disorders – Project 1.005RC. – Project 3.016RC.

Future Horizons, NDCO One Day Autism Conference

Hobart, Tasmania, 16 June

Dr Nancy Salkind

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

Hocking, D., Vivanti, G., Hazi, A.

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Future Horizons, NDCO One Day Autism Conference

Hobart, Tasmania, 16 June

Dr Nancy Salkind

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

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Health and Medical Research Council (2014) – Enhancing learning capacity and academic outcomes in neurodevelopmental disorders – Project 1.005RC. – Project 3.016RC.
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 exchange of information, ideas, directions and needs. This enables the Centre to foster our collaborative research initiatives around particular projects.

Research Collaborators and Partnerships

1. Collaborators at a Tryste University

a. Dr Edith Burns, School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University.
b. Ms Magne Hatt, School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University.

2. Victorian Collaborators

a. Prof. Kailah Conlan, School of Psychology, Deakin University.
b. Prof. Mark Nielsen, School of Psychology, Monash University.
c. Dr Patricia Edge, Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne.
d. Dr Clare Green, Department of Medicine, Austin Health, Melbourne.
e. Dr John Homes, School of Health, University of Western Australia.
f. Dr James Jones, Institute of Psychiatry, London, UK.

3. National Collaborators

a. Dr Jill Ashburner, Autism Queensland.
b. Drs Kate Brown, Liverpool Hospital, Sydney.
c. Prof. Neil Brown, School of Psychology, Flinders University.
d. Dr Debra Costley, Aspect NSW.

CRC Partnerships

1. Collaborators at La Trobe University

a. Dr Susan Douglas, School of Languages and Linguistics, La Trobe University.
b. Dr Minh Bui, School of Mathematical Sciences, La Trobe University.
c. Dr Angelika Anderson, School of Science, University of Trento, Rovereto, Italy.
d. Dr Torab Torabi, School of Engineering, La Trobe University.
e. Dr Alana Hulme Chambers, La Trobe Rural Health Institute.
f. Dr Debra Costley, Aspect NSW.
g. Dr Lyndsay Quarmby, Department of Medicine, Austin Health, University of Melbourne, and Royal Children’s Hospital.

2. Victorian Collaborators

a. Dr Patricia Edge, Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne.
b. Dr Clare Green, Department of Medicine, Austin Health, Melbourne.
c. Dr John Homes, School of Health, University of Western Australia.
d. Dr James Jones, Institute of Psychiatry, London, UK.

3. National Collaborators

a. Prof. Kailah Conlan, School of Psychology, Deakin University.
b. Prof. Mark Nielsen, School of Psychology, Monash University.
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e. Dr John Homes, School of Health, University of Western Australia.
f. Dr James Jones, Institute of Psychiatry, London, UK.

The OTARC Advisory Committee

The OTARC Advisory Committee met to discuss the Centre's progress since its last meeting and to determine the Centre's future directions. Members noted the Centre's success in fostering collaboration with other research centres, both nationally and internationally.

Staff Meetings

Staff meetings are held regularly to discuss administrative and research ideas, directions and needs. This facilitates the Centre's research collaborations and projects.

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The 2014/2015 Annual Report of the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre

Research Collaborators and Partnerships continued

- **Professor Andrew Whitehouse**, Telethon Kids Institute, University of Western Australia, Australia
- **Associate Professor Helen Yang**, School of Psychology, The University of Melbourne, Australia
- **Autism Specific Early Learning and Child Care Research Centre, The University of Queensland, Australia**
- **Professor Ingrid U. Moldau**, Department of Developmental and Comparative Psychology, Max Planck Institute for Developmental Biology, Tubingen, Germany
- **Dr Nick Happe**, Department of Developmental Psychology, University of Barcelona, Spain
- **Dr Martha Johnson**, Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development, Macquarie University, Australia
- **Dr Emily Jones**, Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development, Queen Mary University of London, UK
- **Dr Tony Charman**, Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge, UK, and Department of Psychiatry, McGill University, Canada
- **Professor Rachael Bedford**, Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, UK
- **Professor Tony Collier**, Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, UK
- **Dr Joanne Kwasiborska-Dudek**, Faculty of Education and The Welsh Autism Research Centre, Cardiff University, UK
- **Dr Eva L. Mawachi**, Department of Developmental Psychopathology and The Developing Brain at Presbyterian Hospital, Weill Cornell Medical College, New York, USA
- **Assoc. Prof. Mirowska**, Centre for Autism Research, Politechnika Warszawska, Warsaw, Poland
- **Dr Yasunori Ohnuki**, Graduate School of Education, University of Tsukuba, Japan
- **Dr Richard M. Williams**, Centre for Language Study and The Developing Brain, University of Western Ontario, Canada
- **Professor John C. Stringer**, Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, UK
- **Dr Julian M. Leek**, Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, UK
- **Dr James A. Mulick**, Director of Child Health, Tiangin Women and Children’s Hospital; Professor of Pediatrics, Nankai University, Tianjin, China
- **Dr Shih-Chien Huang**, Autism Treatment Network, USA
- **Dr Kent Williams**, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA, and Nationwide Children’s Hospital and The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA

4. International Collaborators

- **Dr Robert Coghill**, Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, UK
- **Dr Sander Begeer**, Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, UK
- **Dr Eric Butter**, Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, UK
- **Dr Rachael Bedford**, Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, UK
- **Dr Teodora Gliga**, Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, UK
- **Dr Emily Jones**, Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development, Queen Mary University of London, UK
- **Dr Tony Charman**, Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge, UK, and Department of Psychiatry, McGill University, Canada
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In December, OTARC hosted several international and interstate visitors who have been invited to the OTARC campus to discuss and share research and development initiatives of their organisations. 

**Professor Catherine Lord**, Director of the Centre for Autism and the Developing Brain in Pennsylvania Hospital, Villanova, and the McEwen Foundation Symposiums, also joined a visit to OTARC as he is a visiting professor at University of Queensland, Australia. Lord’s visit was part of a larger Science Advisory Committee meeting and provided OTARC opportunities to gain new insights into the development of children with ASD and their parents.

**Visitors to our Centre**

The 2014/2015 Annual Report of the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre

**Dr Andy Shih**, Director of the Autism Speaks public health organisation, was invited to OTARC to discuss possible future collaborations between the two organisations. Dr Shih oversees the Autism Speaks public health organisation, which is a global organization active in over 60 countries.

**Professor James A. Mulick**

- **National Children’s Hospital, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA**
- **Director of Child Health, Tiangin Women and Children’s Hospital; Professor of Pediatrics, Nankai University, Tianjin, China**

**Professor Ingrid U. Moldau**

- **Department of Developmental and Comparative Psychology, Max Planck Institute for Developmental Biology, Tubingen, Germany**

**Dr Nick Happe**

- **Department of Developmental Psychology, University of Barcelona, Spain**

**Dr Martha Johnson**

- **Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development, Macquarie University, Australia**

**Dr Emily Jones**

- **Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development, Queen Mary University of London, UK**

**Dr Tony Charman**

- **Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge, UK, and Department of Psychiatry, McGill University, Canada**

**Professor Rachael Bedford**

- **Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, UK**

**Professor Tony Collier**

- **Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, UK**

**Dr Joanne Kwasiborska-Dudek**

- **Faculty of Education and The Welsh Autism Research Centre, Cardiff University, UK**

**Dr Eva L. Mawachi**

- **Department of Developmental Psychopathology and The Developing Brain at Presbyterian Hospital, Weill Cornell Medical College, New York, USA**

**Assoc. Prof. Mirowska**

- **Centre for Autism Research, Politechnika Warszawska, Warsaw, Poland**

**Dr Yasunori Ohnuki**

- **Graduate School of Education, University of Tsukuba, Japan**

**Dr Richard M. Williams**

- **Centre for Language Study and The Developing Brain, University of Western Ontario, Canada**

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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 Communicative Disorders (DISCO), the first interview to be used in the diagnosis of autism.

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 screening for autism in early childhood (ASCQ-SE) and an early intervention program for children with ASD (SPICE Program). See also page 4.

February 2015

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

Professor Marc de Rosnay, Early Start, University of Wollongong

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

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.

Bernie Finn MP, Victorian State Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Autism Spectrum Disorder, visited OTARC and met with 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.

June 2015

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

Dr Kristelle Hudry and Dr Josephine Barbaro visited the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development (CBCD) at Birkbeck College, University of London, to present a paper on the Stages of Error Learning in Autism, a project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Economic and Social Research Fund. During their visit, they also met with Dr Emily Jones, Professors Mark Johnson and Tony Charman and their team of researchers. The findings from the Stages of Error Learning in Autism (STAIRS) project, together with other recent studies, will be used to inform 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

Professor Kezuka, Mr Joe Fukamachi and Dr Vivanti

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 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 national initiatives: The Autism-CRC and ASfAR, and continues to play a key role in both.

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.

The second annual research meeting was held at La Trobe University on December 4 with keynote speakers Professor Cathy Lord, Dr Andy Shih and Professor Sue Leekam, and other distinguished guests on the program and presented the CRC student poster award.

In December 2014, Dr Kristelle Hudry published a study on the age of diagnosis of autism in Australia: 2010 – 2012 with her NDIA Branch Manager, Ms Mary Hawkins, spoke at the AGM about the current status of the NDIS and its key features with regards to planning and funding for 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 understand and participate in activities to enhance the experience 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 our FACEBOOK page, and more than 1000 followers on our TWITTER page. We also have over 6000 subscribers to our newsletter/BLOG which has over 1800 followers on FACEBOOK, and more than 1800 subscribers to our email list. We have close to 1800 followers on TWITTER and over 1900 on our twitter page. Our website [www.latrobe.edu.au/otarc] over the last year, and averaged 4000 external visits each month to our Centre for autism research.
Talking ASD Research Online

Inside the Lab – Episode 6: Early Autists 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 benefit 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 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 Autism Spectrum Disorder. 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 Martin and Associate Professor Amanda Richdale.

Donations 2014
A total of $571,016.84 was received in donations (see financial statement — Pages 36 and 27)

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

Individual donations
Individual donors (85): $571,016.84
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 Mansfield took part in The Age Run Melbourne 2014 and raised over $2,859.50
• Legionary Nightingale ran for Autism and raised over $1,138.70

OTARC sends a heartfelt thank you to all the donors who supported Melanie and Annie in their fundraising events.
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
Joss Collins
Samantha Cole
Stefan Donnel
Nicole Fisch
Olivia Goddard
Bailey Green
Coree Brewster-Devlin
Lauren Cameron
Lacey Checuti
Jenny Clarke
Joss Collins
Samantha Cole
Stefan Donnel
Nicole Fisch
Olivia Goddard
Bailey Green

Volunteering at OTARC

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.

PhD Candidates
Emma Baker - Supervisors: Associate Professor Amanda Richdale and Dr Josephine Barbaro
Cathy Best - Supervisors: Professor Cheryl Dissanayake and Dr Josephine Barbaro
Megan Clark - Supervisors: Professor Cheryl Dissanayake and Dr Josephine Barbaro
Rena Shrestha - Supervisors: Professor Cheryl Dissanayake and Dr Josephine Barbaro
Kitty Wuyi - Supervisors: Associate Professor Stephen Hart and Professor Cheryl Dissanayake

Doctor of Clinical Psychology Candidates
Megan Grant - Supervisors: Dr Kristelle Hudry and Professor Cheryl Dissanayake
Adelina Khoo - Supervisors: Dr Kristelle Hudry and Dr Annukka Lindell
Zoe Vroman - Supervisors: Professor Cheryl Dissanayake and Dr Josephine Barbaro

Doctor of Clinical Neuropsychology Candidates
Peter Frosting - Supervisors: Dr Giacomo Vivanti, Dr Darren Hocking and Professor Cheryl Dissanayake

Doctor of Clinical Neuropsychology PhD
Britney Koons - Supervisors: Dr Darren Hocking and Dr Elea Labischewski

Master of Clinical Psychology candidates
Andrew Hall - Supervisors: Associate Professor Amanda Richdale and Dr Michael Ulijarevic
Stephanie Martin - Supervisors: Associate Professor Amanda Richdale

2015 Students

PhD Candidates
Emma Baker - Supervisors: Associate Professor Amanda Richdale and Dr Josephine Barbaro
Natalie Bischof - Supervisors: Professor Cheryl Dissanayake and Dr Josephine Barbaro
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

Doctor of Clinical Psychology Candidates
Megan Grant - Supervisors: Dr Kristelle Hudry and Professor Cheryl Dissanayake
Adelina Khoo - Supervisors: Dr Kristelle Hudry and Dr Annukka Lindell
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OTARC staff at the 2014 End-of-year picnic

Successful Completions continued next page
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.

Adolescence Disorder Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) Training

The ADOS is an assessment tool used for the diagnosis of ASDs. ADOS courses are for clinicians and researchers who completed their initial ADOS training previously. The ADOS is an assessment tool used for the diagnosis of ASDs. ADOS courses are 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 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 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 for the September 2014 ADOS training course.

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.

For the September course Dr Hudry invited Dr Vicky Slonims, Consultant Speech and Language Therapist from Coventry and Dr Cherie Green, who is an experienced Consultant Psychologist, to co-facilitate the training. Her presence provided the opportunity for the Junior Trainers to learn from the clinical experience of a highly experienced clinician.

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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/assessment purposes prior to starting their training. For the September course Dr Hudry invited Dr Vicky Slonims, Consultant Speech and Language Therapist from Coventry and Dr Cherie Green, to co-facilitate the training.

Invited Talks and Workshops

21 March 2015

The Rotary Conference, Wagga Wagga
Professor Cheryl Dissanayake
Research at OTARC: Where are we in 2014?

27 November 2014

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

30 July 2014

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

5 August 2014

Monash University Pathway to
Career (Box Hill), Box Hill, Victoria

Dr Kristelle Hudry, Dr Jodie Novice, Dr Jamie Knight, and postgraduate students from the University of Melbourne, RMIT University and La Trobe University.

5 August 2014

CMFCH ASD Statewide Coordinating Committee Meeting, Melbourne, Victoria

Dr Kristelle Hudry, Dr Vicky Slonims, and postgraduate students.

27 November 2014

CMFCH Child & Youth Mental Health Services for ASD State Coordination Board Meeting, Melbourne, Victoria

Professor Anna Richdale.

Research, Research in transition to tertiary education for for DIS and research within the Autism CRC and OTARC.

23 June 2015

Cape York University, Cairns, Queensland

“Caregiving to empower young people with autism to embrace their potential”

10 April 2015

Capital Institute of Pediatrics, Beijing, China, with
Dr Giacomo Vivanti.

10 April 2015

Australian Capital Territory, Australia

“Pathway to Care” for children and young people with autism.

21 March 2015

The Rotary Conference, Wagga Wagga
Professor Cheryl Dissanayake
Research at OTARC: Where are we in 2014?

20 November 2014

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

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CMFCH ASD Statewide Coordinating Committee Meeting, Melbourne, Victoria

Dr Kristelle Hudry, Dr Vicky Slonims, and postgraduate students.

27 November 2014

CMFCH Child & Youth Mental Health Services for ASD State Coordination Board Meeting, Melbourne, Victoria

Professor Anna Richdale.

Research, Research in transition to tertiary education for for DIS and research within the Autism CRC and OTARC.

30 July 2014

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

20 November 2014

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

5 August 2014

Monash University Pathway to
Career (Box Hill), Box Hill, Victoria

Dr Kristelle Hudry, Dr Jodie Novice, Dr Jamie Knight, and postgraduate students from the University of Melbourne, RMIT University and La Trobe University.

5 August 2014

CMFCH ASD Statewide Coordinating Committee Meeting, Melbourne, Victoria

Dr Kristelle Hudry, Dr Vicky Slonims, and postgraduate students.

27 November 2014

CMFCH Child & Youth Mental Health Services for ASD State Coordination Board Meeting, Melbourne, Victoria

Professor Anna Richdale.

Research, Research in transition to tertiary education for for DIS and research within the Autism CRC and OTARC.
The program of the forum included a presentation by Associate Professor Amanda Richdale in which she described the results of the forum’s pilot program that was designed to increase the awareness and perception of research needs. The forum provided a unique opportunity for WAAD service providers to share their experiences with independent living and outlined their commitments to the research needs identified. The forum was moderated by Tom Gleisner, Australian writer, comedian and producer.

At the 2015 WAAD conference, Dr Nancy Sadka, Intake Officer, Early Assessment Clinic (ASELCC), has been awarded the 2015 Australia Day Award for WAAD Service Provider of the Year. Dr Sadka, our Intake Officer, takes time to talk with every family we see, and oversees all administrative aspects of the clinic. We are very excited about the ESDM training professionals in Australia and overseas on the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM). We look forward to continuing to build on our expertise in the early childhood sector. If you are interested in finding out more about ESDM training or our direct ASD services for infants, toddlers or preschoolers with ASD, please contact our Early Assessment Clinic on 1300 793 794 or email autismtraining@latrobe.edu.au.

For any further information on our Early Assessment Clinic (ASELCC) contact us here at the Centre (email autismtraining@latrobe.edu.au or write to us: Early Assessment Clinic (ASELCC), Centre for Living with Autism Spectrum Disorders, The Margot Prior Wing, Victorian Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre, PO Box 123, 930 Sydney Road, West Melbourne, Victoria 3003, Australia. Our ESDM trainers have been very well received and over the last 12 months and have provided training in Melbourne, Perth, Sydney and France. To continue to build on our expertise in the application of the ESDM, the Centre has supported half a dozen UC Berkeley students to travel to the University of California to be trained in 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 becomes 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 preschoolers with ASD, please contact us here at the Centre (email autismtraining@latrobe.edu.au or write to us: Early Assessment Clinic (ASELCC), Centre for Living with Autism Spectrum Disorders, The Margot Prior Wing, Victorian Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre, PO Box 123, 930 Sydney Road, West Melbourne, Victoria 3003, Australia).
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 research information is up-to-date, evidence-based, and of a high standard.

OTARC Operations & Projects

By Rhys York, Senior Advisor, Operations & Projects

As OTARC continues to expand in range of research activities, the Operations and Administration team have undergone significant restructuring. Relying on close collaboration with Administration and colleagues, our team has been able to streamline processes, make the research program more efficient and of a high standard.

• being based at Rupprecht’s U3A ahead of 2014 project completions;
• developing a new mobile application to support parents in the early detection of autism;
• implementing an efficient reporting regime for our CRC projects;
• supporting the involvement of 14,000 children within the Victorian Maternal and Child Health system; and
• supporting the surveillance of 14,000 children within the Victorian Maternal and Child Health system;

OTARC’s successes depend on work with business units at La Trobe and we have continued our close relationship with Digital Learning. These units are staffed with highly professional individuals whose collegiality and giving spirit means OTARC is able to amplify our efforts.

As OTARC continues to expand its range of research activities, the Operations and Administration team are challenging assumptions. We need to consider Administration as part of our core business, and the ORC to take the lead on the development and operations of the OTARC Lab. Our research participants and OTARC Lab need the support of the Administration staff to 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 OTARC have continued a partnership for evaluation of the Play Connect playgroup program – part of the federally funded

Welcome to the OTARC Laboratory Report

By Carmela Germano, Laboratory Manager

In March 2015, the OTARC Laboratory welcomed Alex Asquith, who works closely with us to support the OTARC Participant Registry, under the direction of the OTARC research staff. Alex has been working alongside our lab staff to document the processes and achievements of our projects, to ensure that the relevant information is up-to-date, evidence-based, and of a high standard.

The OTARC Participant Registry has 1817 registrants with numbers increasing every year as researchers recruit participants for the Registry. New participants 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 of our lab.

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

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Lab Meetings

July 11, 2014

Topic: Data collection

Facilitator: Amanda Richdale and Canessa Genovino

Followed by ‘Expectations of Research’ with Giacomo Vivanti

Facilitators: Josephine Barbaro and Darren Hocking

September 5, 2014

Topic: Data entry and data analyses

Facilitator: Carmela Germano

Followed by ‘Expectations of Research’ with Giacomo Vivanti

October 3, 2014

Topic: Ethics Applications, Budgets, and related documentation

Facilitator: Megan Clark

November 7, 2014

Topic: Preparing your CV (Academic and/or Clinical): Skills learned during your Honours study (Clinical): Skills learned during your Honours study

Facilitator: Amanda Richdale and Carmela Germano

October 3, 2014

Topic: How to present your research

Facilitators: Cheryl Dissanayake and Giacomo Vivanti

Followed by ‘Expectations of Research’ with Giacomo Vivanti

November 7, 2014

Topic: Research Proposal and/or Literature Review

Facilitator: Megan Clark

March 13, 2015

Topic: Ethics Applications, Budgets, and related documentation

Facilitator: Megan Clark

April 10, 2015

Topic: OTARC's Research Participant Registry has 1817 registants with numbers increasing every year as researchers recruit participants for the Registry. New participants 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 of our lab.

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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 of January to 31 December 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Grants - DEEWR</td>
<td>$17,362.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Government Grants</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Revenue</td>
<td>$1,039,638.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commmercial Revenue</td>
<td>$97,648.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Grants and Donations</td>
<td>$89,287.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Revenue</td>
<td>$25,917.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Revenue/Transfers</td>
<td>$1,044.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Revenue</td>
<td>$58,467.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,329,363.93</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expenditure: For the period of January to 31 December 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Employee Benefits and on costs</td>
<td>$1,275,563.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>$716,117.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casual - Academic</td>
<td>$244,514.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>$218,475.37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casual - General</td>
<td>$129,552.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other salary related</td>
<td>-$33,095.39</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Non Salary Expenditure</strong></td>
<td><strong>$226,097.75</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure Related</td>
<td>$226,097.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depreciation</td>
<td>$11,546.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Fees</td>
<td>$7,378.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Related</td>
<td>$27,760.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Operating</td>
<td>$55,878.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff related</td>
<td>$54,333.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Expenses &amp; Sundry Items</td>
<td>$34,385.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,501,661.46</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Operating Result</strong></td>
<td><strong>-$172,297.53</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Staffing and Centre Personnel

Academic and Research Staff

Professor Cheryl Dissanayake, Director
Associate Professor Aruna Scholte, Principal Research Fellow
Dr Josephine Bates, Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Dr Danielle Healy, Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Dr Deric Healy, Senior Research Fellow
Dr Nicole Hewey, Senior Lecturer in Developmental Psychology, School of Psychology, and Public Health
Dr Cheryl Dissanayake, Research Fellow
Ms Mariane Muniandy, BIOBANK Research Officer
Dr Kristelle Hudry, Senior Lecturer in Developmental Psychology, School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University
Dr Elfriede Ihsen, Research Fellow
Ms Veronica Rice, Speech Pathologist, Early Assessment Clinic
Dr Heather Nuske, CRC Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Ms Melanie Muniandy, BIOBANK Research Officer
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.

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 Matthew Hale, Lecturer, School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University.
Dr Lesley Stirling, Associate Professor, School of Language and Linguistics, University of Melbourne.

Honorary members

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

Governance - Advisory Committee

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

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 activities, 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.

Professor Margot Prior (Chair), Professor of La Trobe University, University of Melbourne, 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 ASLCC Strategic Advisory Committee, La Trobe University
Mr Clifford Nolan, University Ombudsman, La Trobe University
Mr Tony Stein, Parent
Ms Lia Castorini, AMAZE (2014)
Ms Fiona Sharkie, CEO, AMAZE (2015)
Ms Libby Williams, Administration Officer
Ms Veronica Rice, Speech Pathologist, Early Assessment Clinic
Dr Matthew Hale, Lecturer, School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University
Dr Matthew Hale, Lecturer, 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.
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.

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.