

CART Connection

News from the UCLA Center for Autism Research and Treatment

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Did you know?

ASD commonly co-occurs with other developmental, psychiatric, neurologic, chromosomal, and genetic diagnoses. The co-occurrence of one or more non-ASD developmental diagnoses is 83%. The co-occurrence of one or more psychiatric diagnoses is 10%.

-Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Making the College to Career Transition a Reality for Adults on the Autism Spectrum



By Nicole Rosen and Morgan Jolliffe

Northwestern Mutual Los Angeles presenting donation checks to UCLA CART and CAN clinic

UCLA CART is excited to announce the launch of the groundbreaking College to Career Transition Program, a new initiative assisting young adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in finding and maintaining employment. This innovative program consists of a 10-week intervention, known as PEERS® for Careers, that will teach the necessary soft skills needed to transition from school to the workplace and will include internship opportunities with support from career coaches.

Service Cliff for Adults with ASD

This pioneering effort, led by CART scientists, is of critical importance for countless youth with ASD. Research suggests that young adults with ASD have poor postsecondary employment outcomes, especially in the first two years after high school. In fact, according to a 2012 study, more than 50% of individuals with ASD who had left high school in the past two years had no participation in employment or education (Shattuck et al. 2012). During the first six years after high school, only 55% of youth with ASD had held paid employment, and only 35% had attended college (Shattuck et al. 2012). Moreover, young adults with ASD had the lowest rates of employment compared with youth in other disability categories and with typically-developing youth (Shattuck et al. 2012). These distressing statistics highlight the desperate need for programs like the UCLA College to Career Transition Program.

College to Career, continued on page 2



PEERS group discussing how to chose a career

While the need for employment programs for transition aged youth are widely needed, there is a paucity of research examining effective intervention methods and very few funding mechanisms to support this type of scientific inquiry. In an effort to overcome this funding obstacle, a team of philanthropists from Northwestern Mutual generously hosted a fundraising gala in the fall of 2017 to generate support for this program. This initiative was spearheaded by Chau Le and John Klemm, whose personal connection to autism has ignited their unrelenting determination to provide greater opportunities to individuals with ASD.

A Personal Story Ignites Social Impact

So how does one become an advocate for autism research? In 2015, John Klemm made a life-changing decision to return to UCLA to complete his Bachelor's degree after 27 years. In doing so, Klemm chose to enroll in a course simply titled, "Autism and Neurodiversity." He chose this course, the last of his coursework, in an effort to gain a better understanding of autism spectrum disorder and because he has a son with ASD. Interestingly, the course was taught by a post-graduate instructor on the autism spectrum. Seeing firsthand how this instructor was capable of teaching a college level course, despite having autism, Klemm explained, "Not only did I see hope for my

son's future, but I saw an opportunity for other young adults with ASD to succeed in college and beyond." So, what initially started as a personal decision to help his son, transformed into a much broader endeavor with even greater social impact.

Soon after making the commitment to help other young people with ASD, Klemm partnered with Chau Le, COO of Northwestern Mutual Los Angeles, in a shared mission "to form a vision of a program which would improve and maximize the college experience of students with ASD and increase their employability post-graduation." In the first phase of achieving this mission, and in collaboration with experts at the UCLA Child and Adult Neurodevelopmental (CAN) Clinic and the Center for Autism Research and Treatment (CART), Northwestern Mutual created an internship program focused on employing students with ASD and teaching them valuable job skills in a supportive and inclusive environment. Bridging on the success of this internship program, the UCLA College to Career Transition Program began to take shape and today represents the culmination of a three-year journey of John Klemm, Chau Le, CAN, and CART, with the inclusion of their newest partner, the UCLA PEERS® Clinic.

Addressing the Services and Research Gap

The College to Career Transition Program will feature the PEERS® for Careers curriculum, the newest intervention within the Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS®), which is one of the only evidence-based social skills programs for individuals with ASD. The PEERS® intervention programs, which were developed at UCLA and are currently used in over 70 countries, focus on teaching social skills related to making and keeping friends and developing romantic relationships. In order to expand this curriculum to the workplace, researchers conducted two focus groups in the summer of 2018 with over 30 young adults with ASD and their parents to identify their most salient areas of difficulty in the process of finding and maintaining meaningful employment. This invaluable information was used to inform the development of the PEERS® for Careers curriculum. This trailblazing program will use evidence-based methods of instruction to teach skills such as choosing a career, creating a resume, finding and applying for employment,



Chau Le and John Klemm, PEERS donors

electronic communication, understanding and navigating the workplace culture, interviewing skills, conversational skills, entering and exiting group conversations, humor in the workplace, stress management and executive functioning skills, and conflict resolution.

“Not only did I see hope for my son’s future, but I saw an opportunity for other young adults with ASD to succeed in college and beyond.”

A unique aspect of the College to Career Transition Program is that a dozen undergraduate and graduate students in psychology and other disciplines from UCLA and other surrounding universities in Los Angeles will serve as career coaches for the young adults with ASD. At present, these dedicated career coaches have undergone six months of training in evidence-based methods of working with individuals on the spectrum, and in skills related to obtaining and maintaining meaningful employment. Recently, in anticipation of the start of the course, the research team held a “Speed Coaching” session, similar in structure to speed dating, to allow the young adults with ASD and the career coaches to speak one-on-one for roughly five-minute increments. The purpose of the speed coaching event was to identify who young adult participants and career coaches felt most comfortable working with throughout the program. Participant-Career Coach pairings were then created based on mutual selection preferences.

The PEERS® for Careers program will span ten-weeks, the length of a college quarter. Groups will meet twice per week for 90 minutes each, the equivalent of a three-unit class, and will be led by licensed clinical psychologists from the UCLA PEERS® Clinic. While young adults will be given instruction on the soft skills needed to obtain and maintain employment, career coaches will attend

separate but concurrent sessions to assist participants in effectively applying these skills outside of the research setting. The pairings will meet outside of the group each week to practice the newly-learned skills to ensure generalization and application of learning. As PEERS® developer, Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson explains; “You can never know for certain what challenges will be faced when seeking employment. The inclusion of undergraduate and graduate student career coaches will be essential to insuring that the social skills taught in the course are used appropriately and successfully in the real world.”

Partnerships Creating Opportunities

Another innovative aspect of this program is the inclusion of an internship. Following the completion of the PEERS® for Careers course, young adults will be participating in paid internship opportunities that align with their career interests. While providing the social skills and support needed to help young adults obtain employment is of paramount importance, the research team also recognizes the equally crucial need to support the employers who will be employing these young adults. In reflecting on the collaborations with various employers, CAN Clinical Director, Dr. Amanda Gulsrud remarked; “We have been very excited by the community’s response to the program. Employers are eager to increase diversity in the workplace and partner with us, which is truly inspiring!” The hope is that by working in partnership with young adults, career coaches, and employers, we will keep the lines of communication and collaboration open, promoting a healthy dialogue for all parties involved, and ultimately ensure successful employment for adults with ASD.

[If you would like more information about this study, or if you would like to help support this program, please contact the research team at 310-26-PEERS or email us at \[peersclinic@ucla.edu\]\(mailto:peersclinic@ucla.edu\).](#)



PEERS participants and career coaches in a round of “speed coaching” one-on-one interviews

A Family's Journey in Becoming Autism Research Advocates

By Cara Gardenswartz, Ph.D.

I first came to UCLA as a doctoral student in the Department of Psychology. During my time at UCLA, I learned about advancements in autism, the friendship program, and the latest behavioral interventions. Little did I realize that 20 years later I would come back to UCLA seeking help for my teenager with autism. My son, Eli, who has ASD, participated in the PEERS program for teens in 2017, two years ago, at the age of 13. And my husband and I, along with the other parents of the PEERS group, received our own PEERS education simultaneously. We became Eli's "social coaches."

The 16-week PEERS for Adolescents program was truly transformational. Our teens, (and us social coaches) were given a strategic "rulebook" on how to engage in various social situations, best practices to make and keep friends, including target behaviors and nonverbal cues. This could include anything from how close to stand to people while conversing, to finding common interests as a way to get together with potential friends, to what is (and isn't) appropriate humor. The teens were also given the opportunity to practice their new skills with the other group members.

"Now two years after completing the program, Eli is the manager of the boy's high school basketball team and is LOVED by his classmates — often called the 'nicest kid in school.'"

All of the skills being taught in PEERS had been shown to be empirically valid -- in other words, PEERS wasn't making up what they



Eli and Cara Gardenswartz, PEERS for Dating donor family

thought was needed in social interactions. Instead, they did research to find out which skills mattered, how to teach these skills to teens, and assessed changes in the adolescents' social skills at the end of their 16 weeks in PEERS, and even years later. As a psychologist, this thoughtful scientific inquiry was extremely important to me.

As a neurotypical parent, I could see the "mistakes" my son had been making, but I didn't have a guidebook to proactively instruct him on alternative behaviors and positive strategies. After every session, we practiced these new skills and then he would try them out on teens outside of the program. In time, he became more confident, more socially appropriate, and happier. We were told that

the progress would continue after graduation from PEERS, and it has. Now two years after completing the the program, Eli is the

manager of the boy's high school basketball team and is LOVED by his classmates -- often called the "nicest kid in school." Without some of these tools, he might not have naturally attracted the same students that are now drawn to him.

Despite these improvements, a year after graduating from PEERS we noticed that there was something missing. Eli was developing an interest in girls, which was age appropriate. "Who liked who..." and "who is so and so's girlfriend/boyfriend..." was common speak at school in the 8th grade. Eli had learned skills on how to make and keep friends, but did not know how to show "romantic" interest in someone the way the other kids did. And we didn't have a rule book including how to ask someone out, how to flirt, or differentiate between showing an interest in a girl or stalking! As a psychologist I am well-versed in the literature that shows that romantic relationships can be predictors of overall mental health and happiness as adults. I wanted my son to have the opportunity to date and have such relationships. Just as these concerns were

A Family's Journey, continued on page 12

Functional Genomics of Neuropsychiatric Disorders

By Rebecca Walker

Science that involves production of “big data” is becoming more and more common and requires many labs from different institutions working together to form consortia. The NIH Human Genome project is an example of such a consortium. In order to tackle many of the current challenges regarding the study of the brain, the PsychENCODE consortium was established to create an atlas of the human brain. This “big data” approach is vital for researchers to study how our genomes work, that is how changes in the genetic code (DNA) affect how genes are turned on or off and how they play a role in brain development and neuropsychiatric disorders.

As part of the PsychENCODE Consortium, The Geschwind lab at UCLA led two studies recently published in Science, which aim to characterize which parts of the genome regulate genes in the human brain with the primary goal of furthering the understanding of their role in brain disorders such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Schizophrenia (SCZ), and Bipolar Disorder

(BD). These disorders are highly heritable and hundreds of genetic changes in DNA have been previously identified that increase risk for ASD, SCZ, and BD. Many of these changes occur outside the regions of DNA that code for a functional gene and are likely to be regulatory elements active in the brain. However, figuring out which regulatory element affects which gene and how they do so is not a simple task.

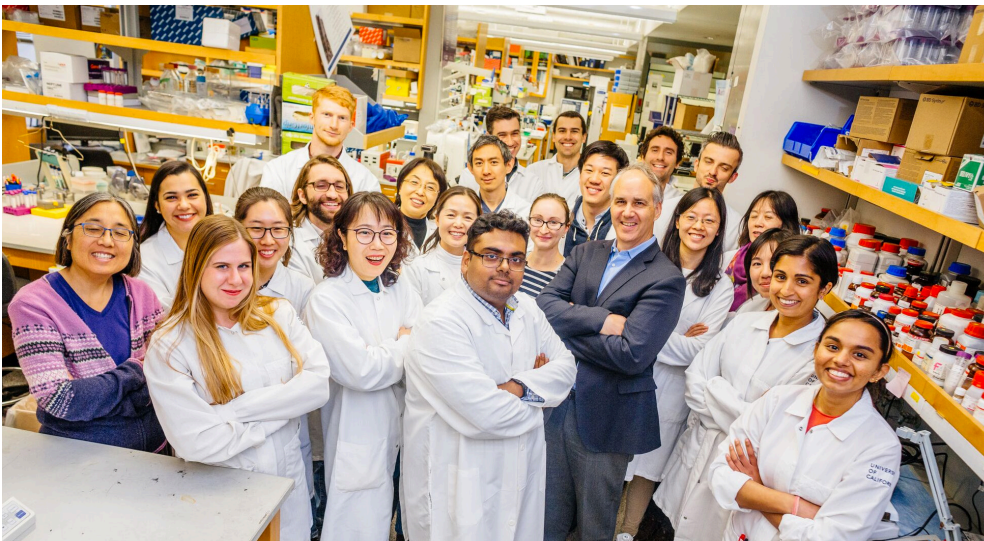
To address this challenge, Geschwind and colleagues generated a large collection of datasets to help map which areas of the human genome “regulate” (have effects on) the level of genes in the adult brain. These data include: a) Groups of genes that are expressed similarly and suggestively function together in a similar biological process, b) Genes that are active in specific brain cell types (such as neurons, glia, and astrocytes), and c) DNA changes linked to the expression levels of a given gene. Combining all of these data types has helped researchers discover how a DNA change can impact how a gene is turned on, what other genes it may interact with, and in



The Geschwind Lab recently had two studies published in Science

which specific cell types in the brain. All of these types of data are vital for understanding the basis of neuropsychiatric disease.

In a complimentary paper, Geschwind and colleagues assessed levels of genes in brain samples from 1,695 individuals with ASD, SCZ, BD and controls. They were able to identify patterns of gene level dysregulation associated with each of the three brain disorders. They found that many dysregulated genes are involved in neuron signaling (the process by which neurons communicate to each other) and in neuroinflammation (the immune response in the brain). Lastly, by integrating these gene patterns with DNA changes found to be associated with each of the three disorders, they were able to identify new candidate risk genes, 5 in ASD, 11 in BD, and 64 in SCZ, with some shared genes between BD and SCZ. Together, these data and newly identified genes further our understanding of disease mechanisms and provide potential therapeutic targets for precision medicine.



Dr. Dan Geschwind and his lab at UCLA

New Psychosocial Education Group



UCLA CART and the CAN Clinic is excited to announce the added support of Licensed Clinical Social Worker; Kyle Cassidy. Mrs. Cassidy joined UCLA in 2016, with notable compassion

and determination for improving the quality of life for individuals with special needs. Raised in Colorado, Mrs. Cassidy received her master's degree in Social Work from the University of Denver. Her graduate and post-graduate level work included providing assessment, treatment, and support services for individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders in the school and community setting.

As a social worker for the Child and Adult Neurodevelopmental Clinic (CAN) and The Care and Research in Neurogenetics Clinic (CARING), Mrs. Cassidy provides assessments for diagnostic evaluations, as well as consultations for patients and families seeking treatment recommendations in their community. Understanding the myriad of emotions that families may experience obtaining an evaluation and then accessing treatment services led to her development of a new psychosocial education group for parents. This 6-week group, for parents who have had a child recently diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), provides current and comprehensive information related to autism spectrum disorder, and supports parents in implementing effective strategies to promote social communication and manage challenging behaviors. Interested parents can contact the UCLA CAN Clinic at (310)794-4008 to register for this group.

A Crash Course in Social Skills: New PEERS® Boot Camps

By Morgan Jolliffe and Nicole Rosen

The UCLA PEERS® Clinic is excited to announce our newest service, PEERS® Boot Camps! These Boot Camps are designed to teach targeted skills from the PEERS® social skills curricula, one of the only evidence-based programs for teens and young adults with autism spectrum disorder and other social challenges. PEERS® Boot Camps are designed to give “crash courses” in social skills to anyone interested in learning more about developing and maintaining relationships.

PEERS® Boot Camps will cover a range of topics including conversational skills, friendship skills, handling bullying and other forms of conflict and dating etiquette.

- **Conversation Boot Camp:** June 1-2, 2019 Teaches skills related to having reciprocal two-way conversations, as well as starting, entering, and exiting conversations.
- **Friendship Boot Camp:** September 7-8, 2019 Explores how to find a good source of friends, how to plan and host successful get-togethers, and rules of good sportsmanship.
- **Bullying-Proofing Boot Camp:** November 9-10, 2019 Covers how to handle teasing, physical bullying, cyber bullying, rumors and gossip, as well as how to manage arguments and disagreements.
- **Dating Boot Camp:** March 7-8, 2020 Focuses on skills such as letting someone know you like them, flirting, asking someone on a date, managing rejection, going on dates, and general dating do's and don'ts.

PEERS® Boot Camps are led by Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson, Founding Director of the UCLA PEERS® Clinic and developer of the PEERS® intervention programs, and/ or Dr. Shannon Bates, certified PEERS® Trainer and UCLA Clinical Faculty.

If you are interested in attending any of the PEERS® Boot Camps, please contact us at peersclinic@ucla.edu or 310-26-PEERS to register.



Clinicians and participants discussing disagreements at PEERS Dating Bootcamp in March

Sensory, Cognitive, and Affective Neurodevelopment (SCAN) lab



By Kaitlin Cummings

Dr. Shulamite Green and Dr. Susan Bookheimer recently completed a study focused on sensory habituation in autism, funded by the Simons Foundation for Autism Research Initiative (SFARI). Their study, which examined brain response to aversive tactile and auditory sensations, found that most children and adolescents with autism showed atypical brain responses to the sensory stimuli. However, there were two distinct patterns of atypical responses. The youth with autism who were rated as having high sensory over-responsivity by their parents showed reduced habituation in amygdala and relevant sensory cortices (those that process auditory and tactile sensations), and reduced inhibition of irrelevant sensory cortices (e.g., primary visual cortex). On the other hand, the ASD youth with lower parent-rated sensory over-responsivity showed typical amygdala habituation but reduced responsiveness to novel but similar stimuli. They also had greater prefrontal-amygdala regulation than either typically-developing youth, or ASD youth with high sensory over-responsivity. These results suggest that while most ASD youth show some atypicalities in sensory processing, a specific subgroup may attempt to compensate for these difficulties

by increasing prefrontal regulation of the amygdala. By taking into consideration the different neurobiological profiles of those with autism, therapists and researchers may be able to develop more targeted sensory interventions.

Dr. Shulamite Green's Sensory, Cognitive, and Affective Neurodevelopment (SCAN) lab continues to study the neurobiological basis of atypical sensory processing across different groups of children. Dr. Green's current study, Sensory Over-responsivity in Autism Spectrum Disorder and Early Life Adversity integrates brain data (fMRI, Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy), behavior (parent and self-reported questionnaires as well as observed behavior), and psychophysiology (heart rate and skin conductance responses) to examine sensory processing in children with autism, children who have been adopted from foster care, and typically-developing children.

There is rapidly increasing interest in studying sensory processing in autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders, particularly since atypical sensory responses were added to the DSM-V as part of the diagnostic criteria for autism spectrum by increasing prefrontal regulation of the

sensory-focused measures, such as the new ACE Network Girls Study, led by Dr. Mirella Dapretto. This multi-site study is unique in its goal of recruiting comparable numbers of males and females with autism, allowing us to potentially observe sex differences as it relates to sensory processing.

If you or someone you know is interested in participating in one of our sensory-focused studies, please contact Kaitlin Cummings at (310)206-0586 or by email at autism.ucla@gmail.com.



Dr. Green is an Assistant Clinical Professor in UCLA's Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences

Dr. Susan Bookheimer is the Joaquin M. Fuster Chair in Cognitive Neuroscience at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA



Dr. Mirella Dapretto is Professor of Psychiatry in the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA

Early brain differences in infant siblings of children with ASD

By Janelle Liu and Mirella Dapretto

In the Dapretto lab, we have been using MRI to study early differences in brain development in infants at high familial risk for developing ASD as part of the Baby BIDS project funded by NIH through our Autism Centers of Excellence (ACE). Infant siblings of children with ASD are 20 times more likely than the general population to be diagnosed with the disorder. Our goal is to examine early atypicalities in brain structure and function well before the onset of overt ASD symptoms.

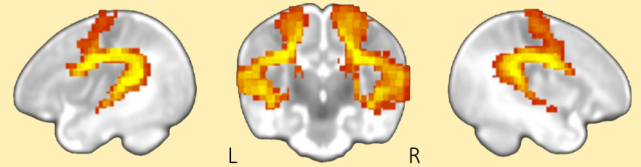
In the lab, we have been studying brain development in infants as early as 6 weeks of age, which is the youngest age examined in this high-risk population to date. One of our aims is to investigate the development of brain networks that are associated with language and sensory processing using MRI data collected in the same infants at 6 weeks and 9 months of age during natural sleep. In a study published last year (Liu et al., 2018),

we examined the key structural pathways connecting language regions in 6-week-old infants at high and low risk for ASD. We found that the left hemisphere language tracts were less robust in high-risk infants compared to the low-risk group. Structural connectivity at this early age was also related to later development: infants who had more robust left hemisphere tracts at 6 weeks of age had higher language scores at 18 months and infants who showed more rightward asymmetry in these language pathways at 6 weeks of age had more severe ASD symptomatology scores at 36 months.

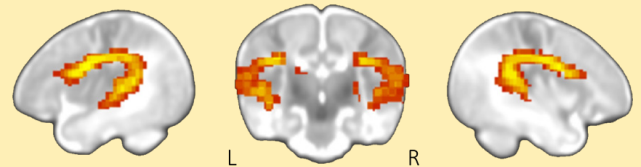
Our findings suggest that altered structural connectivity beginning very early in infancy could have cascading effects leading to delayed language acquisition and altered language processing later on in development. Through Baby BIDS, we are

Major Language Tracts in the Infant Brain

Arcuate Fasciculus (AF)



Superior Longitudinal Fasciculus (SLF)



continuing to gain a better understanding of the brain mechanisms underlying social communicative impairments associated with the disorder, which could ultimately lead to more timely and effective interventions due to increased neuroplasticity early in development.

Study Spotlight: Baby BIDS

Dr. Shafali Jeste and Dr. Mirella Dapretto are examining brain function and behavior in early infancy in their CART research study entitled Baby Brain Imaging and Behavior Study (Baby BIDS). The purpose of this study is to identify predictors of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the first year of life. The research is studying infants who are considered at risk for autism because they have an older sibling with autism or have a diagnosis of Tuberous Sclerosis Complex or 22q11.2 deletion or duplication syndrome. They examine brain function using MRI and EEG, and behavior from 6 weeks of age until age 3. The ultimate goal is to link genetic variants to distinct patterns of brain development, structure and function in ASD and steer infants towards early intervention at a younger age.

This study is currently enrolling families who have a newborn that has:

- a) an older sibling diagnosed with autism,
- b) a clinically confirmed diagnosis of Tuberous Sclerosis Complex,
- c) a clinically confirmed diagnosis of 22q11.2 deletion or duplication syndrome, or
- d) an older sibling with typical development and no family history of autism

To learn more please contact 310 825 3478 or ucla.autism@gmail.com.



Baby Brain Imaging & Behavior Study

Kasari Lab and Community Partners Host Autism Conference in South Los Angeles



By Soo Lee

AIR-B partners and community members enjoying the conference

The Kasari Lab and its community partners hosted their 5th annual autism conference, Autism Unplugged: Contemporary Issues in ASD, on Friday, March 8, 2019. This conference, held annually at the Holman United Methodist Church, brings researchers, parents, and community members together to discuss autism related issues and share research findings. It mainly targets under-resourced parents and attracts over 250 attendees every year. Spanish and Korean translations are provided to accommodate non-English-speaking guests.

The conference is an integral part of research conducted by the AIR-B Network (Autism Intervention Research Network on Behavioral Health; PI: Dr. Connie Kasari), funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The AIR-B Network consists of UCLA, Healthy African American Families (HAAF), UC Davis, University of Pennsylvania, University of Rochester, Drexel University, and each site's community partners. This year, the conference was also attended by all AIR-B site partners and the HRSA program officer.

The conference highlighted topics that are current and relevant to communities of color affected by autism – AIR-B's community-partnered research, neuroscience updates, disability and juvenile justice system, evidence-based treatments, developmental trajectories in autism, and experiences of fathers and self-advocates representing African American, Korean, and Latino communities. UCLA CART faculty Dr. Catherine Lord, AIR-B PI Dr. Sheryl Kataoka of the UCLA Semel Institute, and other AIR-B partners served as speakers. In addition to educational topics, the day was also filled with fun – raffle drawings, performance by the Miracle Project Live! and networking sessions.

The Korea Times, one of the largest Korean language newspapers in the U.S., published an interview with Soo Lee, Dr. Kasari's graduate student, who in partnership with HAAF's leaders directed the conference. Active community participation and strong partnership built over the years were the key to success of the event. The conference once again reminded AIR-B partners that authentic partnership where research and community complement each other is worth striving for.



UCLA AIR-B PIs Dr. Connie Kasari, Dr. Sheryl Kataoka, Dr. Amanda Gulsrud, and HAAF director Felica Jones with other AIR-B university partners

Research at CART

Biomarkers and Genetics Research



SPARK: Simons Foundation Powering Autism Research and Knowledge (PI: Amanda Gulsrud, PhD)

Examines genetics of individual diagnosed with ASD.

Age range: All ages

Contact: (310) 206-7478



Baby Brain Imaging and Behavior Study (Baby BIBS) (PIs: Shafali Jeste, MD, Mirella Dapretto, PhD Co-I: Carrie Bearden, PhD)

Examines early brain development in infants at high-risk for ASD to identify children for early intervention.

Age range: < 3 months

Contact: (310) 825-3478



Motor Skills in Autism Spectrum Disorder (PI: Rujuta Wilson, MD)

Examines motor function, social communication, and behavior in children with ASD.

Age range: 10 months - 17 years

Contact: (310) 825-1746



Brain and Behavior in Genetics Syndrome (B-BIGS) (PI: Shafali Jeste, MD)

Examines cognitive and social communication of children with intellectual disability or global developmental delay using EEG.

Age range: 1 - 18 years

Contact: (310) 825-8738

Autism Genetics and Human Diversity Study (PI: Daniel Geschwind, MD)

Examines genetics of African American families.

Age range: 3 + years

Contact: (310) 794-4090

Measuring Brain Inflammation in Autism

Examines brain inflammation and cognitive and behavioral symptoms of ASD, involves a treatment of minocycline and PET scans for males.

Age range: 18 - 35 years

Contact: (310) 267-4798

Sensory Over-Responsivity in Autism Spectrum Disorder and Early Adversity (PI: Susan Bookheimer, PhD)

Neuroimaging and behavioral assessments for children interacting with their sensory environment.

Age range: 7 - 17 years

Contact: (310) 825-5326

Tracking Health in Kids (THiNK) (PI: Catherine Lord, PhD)

Examines behavioral response to health and life events.

Parents/caregivers record child's health over 3 months using a smartphone app.

Age range: 2 - 7 years

Contact: (310) 794-9899

Neural basis of social cognition in youth with autism and schizophrenia (PI: Susan Bookheimer, PhD)

Examines social cognition differences in youth with and without ASD or schizophrenia spectrum disorder (SSD), using brain scans, surveys, and behavioral and IQ testing.

Age range: 12 - 18 years

Treatment Research



Joint Engagement in Infants at Risk for ASD: Integrating Treatment with Biomarkers (Baby Bears) (PI: Connie Kasari, PhD)

JASPER intervention to improve social and communication skills in children who have early signs of autism.

Age range: 12 - 36 months

Contact: (310) 825-4775



JASPER Early Intervention for Infants with Tuberous Sclerosis Complex (JETS) (PI: Shafali Jeste, MD)

JASPER intervention to improve social communication for children with clinical diagnosis of TSC.

Age range: 12 - 36 months

Contact: (310) 825-8738



Mind the Gap (PI: Connie Kasari, PhD)

Intervention for caregivers of children between ages 2-8 years of age to provide caregivers with information and educational materials about ASD and the service system.

Age range: 2 - 8 years

Contact: (310) 825-4775



Building Better Bridges (BBB) (PI: Connie Kasari, PhD)

Intervention for families, which will provide families with a package of tools to aid their child in successful transition process throughout the school system.

Age range: 4- 16 years

Contact: (310) 825-4775

Treatment with Aripiprazole and Behavior Intervention for Children with Autism who have Low Language Ability (PI: James McCracken, MD, Connie Kasari, PhD)

Language intervention and the combined effects of medication (Aripiprazole or placebo), aimed at improving communication for children with low language ability.

Age range: 5 - 11 years

Contact: (310) 825-6170

Proof of Mechanism Study for the Treatment of Social Anhedonia in ASD (PI: James McCracken, MD)

Behavioral intervention (UCLA PEERS®) examining the combined effects of medication (L-DOPA or placebo), aimed at increasing social skills.

Age range: 13 - 30 years

Clinical Services at CART

Young Children

UCLA Intervention Program

Provides education and therapeutic services, which promote the development and quality of life and assist parents and extended family members as they plan for unique needs of their child. Play-based program, child-directed, parent-friendly.
Contact: (310) 825-4821

Early Childhood Partial Hospitalization Program

The ECPHP is a short-term integrated day treatment program for young children who have been diagnosed with, or may have, autism, developmental disabilities, and behavior disorders. ECPHP is a five-day a week, six-hour a day program. All aspects of the program are fully integrated and coordinated to create an individualized, comprehensive, consistent, interdisciplinary, and therapeutic environment.
Contact: (310) 206-2695

Elementary School & Early Adolescents

Parenting and Children's Friendship Program

The program offers parent-assisted social skills group programs for children in elementary school (beginning at end of 1st grade) who are having problems making and/or keeping friends. We also offer parent training/behavior modification programs for parents with children (starting at age 2) and early adolescents (age 12½-15½).
Contact: (310) 825-0142

Ages 6 - 12

ABC Partial Program

The Achievement, Behavior, Cognition (ABC) Child Programs in the Neuropsychiatric Hospital at UCLA provides psychiatric services through the Partial Hospitalization Program and the Intensive Outpatient Program. ABC Child Programs are time-limited, integrated programs dedicated to assisting children ages 6-12 and their families to promote positive emotional and behavioral health.
Contact: (310) 825-0415

Preschool, Teens & Young Adults

Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relationship Skills (PEERS®)

PEERS is a manualized, social skills training intervention for preschool aged children, adolescents and young adults. It has strong evidence-base for use with preschool aged children, teens, and young adults with autism spectrum disorders, but is also appropriate for teens and young adults with ADHD, anxiety, depression, and other socioemotional problems.

College to Careers Program

Free social skills group for college students. 10-week program teaches skills related to employment.
Contact: (310) 267-3377

All Ages

Child and Adult Neurodevelopmental (CAN) Clinic

The UCLA Child and Adults Neurodevelopmental Clinic (CAN Clinic) is our outpatient clinic located at UCLA's Westwood Medical Campus. The CAN Clinic provides multidisciplinary assessments and evidence-based treatment for individuals with suspected disorders of social, cognitive, language, and motor development, including ASD.

The services provided at the CAN Clinic include:

- Evaluation
- Treatments
- Long-term medical and psychiatric care
- Referrals for genetic testing

Contact: (310) 794-4008

Care and Research in Neurogenetics (CARING) Clinic

The Care and Research in Neurogenetics (CARING) Clinic is a multidisciplinary clinic that evaluates and treats children with neurodevelopmental disorders (including autism, global developmental delay or intellectual disability) and a known genetic syndrome or variant. Directed by Dr. Shafali Jeste, a pediatric neurologist, the clinic provides comprehensive evaluations and care for children with complex needs, with the team of specialists including neurology, genetics, psychiatry and psychology.
Contact: (310) 206-7404

Research at CART, continued from page 10

Are you interested in participating in a research study?

Research studies advance our knowledge of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), leading to earlier diagnosis and better treatment. Research at CART focuses on a variety of topics surrounding ASD, including early identification of brain and behavioral signs underlying autism and effective treatments and intervention practices for people with ASD. Participation in research studies is free! To learn more about our research studies and how to enroll, please visit the CART website: www.autism.ucla.edu, contact the study coordinator directly, or call our general information line at (310) 825-9041.

Reach more about research at the CART lab websites:

Gandal Lab: <https://gandallab.dgsom.ucla.edu/pages/>

Geschwind Lab: <https://geschwindlab.dgsom.ucla.edu/pages/>

Golshani Lab: <https://golshaniab.neurology.ucla.edu/>

Jeste Lab: <http://jestelab.org/>

Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior:

<https://www.iddrc.ucla.edu/iddrc/>

Kasari Lab: <http://www.kasariab.org/>

A Family's Journey, continued from page 4

starting to surface, I heard from Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson (the brains behind PEERS) that she was playing around with the idea of a PEERS for Dating curriculum and I became excited with this possibility. At that point, we decided to meet to figure out how to make PEERS for Dating a reality.

During our meeting, Dr. Laugeson explained to us that she had tried for years to get funding to develop and test PEERS for Dating. Although everyone seemed to agree that this was a much-needed intervention, the funding wasn't there. While she and I knew the importance of romantic relationships (which starts with ability to date) and its connection to mental health (e.g., people unable to form romantic relationships have higher rates of depression, shorter lifespan, etc.), funding agencies considered dating interventions something extra, like a bonus to more convention may actually be an essential ingredient to good mental health. My husband and I want that for our son and for

other teens and adults on the spectrum. And so it was decided. We would make PEERS for Dating, and the research behind it, our philanthropic mission.

Our family's decision to make PEERS for Dating a reality, and to support the research behind the program, began just over one year ago. In a few weeks, our son will take part in the first installment of the research program -- a weekend "boot camp" on dating -- which is available to both teens and adults. The boot camp, like PEERS for Dating, will include lessons on flirting, asking and going on dates, and general rules about dating etiquette. This two-day boot camp will help Dr. Laugeson and the PEERS team work out the kinks before they begin a randomized controlled trial to study the efficacy of this cutting-edge program. Like previous studies with the PEERS interventions, participants in the 16-week PEERS for Dating program will be assessed before and after the treatment to assess changes in mental health, happiness, skill

acquisition and generalization to determine the efficacy.

It is our family's hope that through this groundbreaking research, countless adolescents and adults with autism spectrum disorder will experience the life transforming effects of this powerful program. To help those with ASD lead more meaningful lives through the development of relationships with others is not only our hope, it is our mission. This is the story of one family's journey in becoming autism research advocates.



Eli Gardenswartz

Upcoming Events at CART

UCLA CART Distinguished Lecture Series

UCLA CART offers the distinguished scientific lecture series on the first (*or other*) Friday of each month through June. This lecture series brings scientific experts from around the country and internationally to present and discuss multidisciplinary topics of autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The lectures are free and open to the public.

Location:

All lectures will take place at UCLA. See the postings below for each lecture's location.

Time:

Doors open and coffee served: 8:30AM
Lecture: 9:00AM-10:00AM
Questions & Discussion: 10:00AM-10:30AM

May 10, 2019*

Speaker: Jana Iverson, PhD

University of Pittsburgh

Title: *Early Motor and Communicative Development in Infants with an Older Sibling with ASD*

Location: UCLA Gonda (Goldschmied)

Neuroscience & Genetics

Research Center

1st Floor Conference Room

695 Charles E. Young Drive South

Los Angeles, CA 90095

June 7, 2019

Speaker: Somer Bishop, PhD

University California San Francisco

Title: TBA

Location: UCLA Gonda (Goldschmied)

Neuroscience & Genetics

Research Center

1st Floor Conference Room

695 Charles E. Young Drive South

Los Angeles, CA 90095

Donate to CART

Please consider making a

donation to CART. CART's

goal is to change the lives of

families impacted by autism

by understanding its causes,

improving diagnosis, and

developing transformative

therapies. Contact Elizabeth

Trejo, Director of Development, at

(310) 367-3482.