

# Screening practices and factors influencing autism spectrum disorder screening by community paediatricians

Project Summary

Centre for Leadership in Child Development

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RESEARCH INSTITUTE

## SHARING OUR WORK

Presenting a poster at the  
Canadian Paediatric Society  
Annual Conference June 2015

Informing current workshops at  
Holland Bloorview for ASD  
diagnosis for community  
physicians

Collaborating with curriculum  
development for physicians in  
training

Creating an online platform to  
share information regarding  
screening, diagnosis, and access  
to resources for ASD targeted at  
community physicians in  
primary care

## WHAT WAS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

The main purpose of this study was to examine community paediatricians' autism spectrum disorder (ASD) screening practices and identify factors influencing paediatricians' decisions for using ASD screening tools.

This early study is important for future design and implementation of sustainable programs for early detection of ASD.

## WHAT DID WE DO?

Our study uses what is called a cross-sectional survey design. This involved the creation of a survey that was reviewed then sent out to community paediatricians.

In total, we sent out 560 surveys to paediatricians in Ontario. Forty-eight percent of physicians responded. Among those who responded, half were eligible to participate in our study.

The survey was used to collect both quantitative data, such as how many physicians use an ASD screening tool, as well as qualitative data, such as how can we better support physicians around ASD diagnosis. We then analyzed the data for trends.

## IMPACT FOR CLIENTS, FAMILIES AND CLINICAL PRACTICE

The data we collected provides us with important insight into how community paediatricians practice.

It also identified potential targets to support physicians, and ultimately clients, in the community. Community physicians are often at the frontline of care for many of our clients and by assessing their needs, we can help provide better support for client and family centred care.

## WHAT DID WE LEARN?

- We identified potential educational targets to help physicians with the challenges they face around ASD diagnosis
- Over half of the participants in this study did not make the diagnosis of ASD in their practice
- Access to resources and interventions for ASD is difficult for some community physicians
- Community physicians viewed tertiary centres, such as Holland Bloorview, as a facilitator to access to resources for clients with ASD

## NEXT STEPS?

Our focus will be to target the educational gaps we identified in our study.

We plan to create an online platform to allow physicians to more easily access information regarding screening, diagnosis, and access to resources for ASD.

We also plan to use our data to inform current workshops around ASD diagnosis for community paediatricians as well as curriculum development for physicians in training.

## TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS STUDY, PLEASE CONTACT:

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## WHO ARE WE?

Angie Ip is a developmental paediatrics resident completing her training at Holland Bloorview. Sharon Smile, Evdokia Anagnostou, and Alvin Loh are physicians and members of the Developmental Paediatrics Division of the University of Toronto. Sharon Smile and Evdokia Anagnostou both work at Holland Bloorview specializing in the care of children with ASD. Annie Dupuis is our exceptional biostatistician. Adriana Munoz, a general pediatrician, and Tyler Dodds, PhD, were invaluable as research assistants to this project.

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