

# Autism spectrum disorder: Early identification and diagnosis workshop for community paediatricians

Project Summary

Centre for Leadership in Child Development

*Jessica Brian, PhD, Melanie Penner, MD, Anne Kawamura, MD, Pam Green, NP, Julie Chiba Branson, RC & Salina Eldon, RC*

**Holland Bloorview**

Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

**Bloorview**

RESEARCH INSTITUTE

## SHARING OUR WORK

*We plan to continue our relationship with workshop attendees by offering monthly mentorship meetings. These will allow participants to contact us with questions they have encountered when assessing patients with suspected ASD.*

*We have planned a program evaluation that includes a survey of all participants six months after the workshop, as well as more in-depth interviews with participants showing the most and least practice change. We hope to incorporate results of the program evaluation into future offerings of the workshop, as well as to promote this as an educational model.*

## WHAT WAS THIS WORKSHOP ABOUT?

The purpose of this workshop was to enhance the diagnostic skills of general paediatricians for autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The workshop targeted four areas of the diagnostic process:

- 1) Determining whether the diagnosis of ASD fits with the child's strengths and challenges using a thorough history and interaction/observation with the family and child;
- 2) Communicating the diagnosis to the family in a clear and sensitive way;
- 3) Arranging for all available resources for the family after the diagnosis; and
- 4) Using appropriate billing and efficient practice management strategies.

## WHAT DID WE DO?

We designed and hosted a workshop for community paediatricians that occurred March 7, 2015.

There were twenty-five available spots for registration; the workshop had sold out with a full waiting list within five days of being offered.

## IMPACT FOR CLIENTS, FAMILIES AND CLINICAL PRACTICE

Providing this training for paediatricians practicing in the community will hopefully allow more children with ASD to be diagnosed in this setting.

This will benefit these children by allowing them earlier access to critically important interventions, as well as reducing the wait time for assessment at tertiary care centres like Holland Bloorview.

## WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Overall, there were 11 out of 25 attendees who completed the post-workshop survey.

- All attendees who completed the post-workshop survey rated the event as either ‘Excellent’ or ‘Very good’, except for one individual who did not rate the event
- Achievement of the workshop learning objectives were rated as follows (all objectives were rated as either fully or partially achieved):
  - Identify community physician role in the diagnosis of ASD, which children to diagnose, and the essential elements of a diagnostic assessment
    - 10 respondents felt that this objective was achieved
  - Communicate a diagnosis of ASD to families (having practiced this skills during a patient simulation session)
    - 9 respondents felt that this objective was achieved
  - Comprehensively and efficiently connect families to community services, including interventions, family support and other referrals
    - 9 respondents felt that this objective was achieved
  - Use efficient methods for assessment with appropriate billing codes
    - 7 respondents felt that this objective was achieved

## NEXT STEPS?

Our team has submitted our proposal for a program evaluation to the Research Ethics Board at Holland Bloorview. Results from this evaluation will be used to inform development of future educational events, as well as to publish and promote our training model in Canada and beyond.

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

*Melanie Penner*  
Principal Investigator

[mpenner@hollandbloorview.ca](mailto:mpenner@hollandbloorview.ca)

*Jessica Brian*  
Principal Investigator

[jbrian@hollandbloorview.ca](mailto:jbrian@hollandbloorview.ca)

### WHO ARE WE?

Melanie Penner MD FRCPC is a developmental paediatrician and a clinician investigator at Holland Bloorview.

Jessica Brian PhD is a clinical psychologist and a clinician investigator at Holland Bloorview.

Julie Chiba Branson is an occupational therapist and a clinic operations manager at Holland Bloorview.

Anne Kawamura MD FRCPC is a developmental paediatrician and a clinician educator at Holland Bloorview.

Pam Green is a nurse practitioner at Holland Bloorview.

Salina Eldon is a research assistant at the Autism Research Centre/Bloorview Research Institute.

### THIS PROJECT WAS FUNDED BY:

Centres for Leadership in Child Development – Holland Bloorview  
Kids Rehabilitation Hospital