Here’s what happened at the African Regional IMFAR!

Students and trainees from South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, India, Kenya, Ethiopia, the USA, and Botswana - to name just a handful of countries represented - came together over music and food to celebrate our shared passion for autism and mental health research at this year’s African Regional IMFAR. The spirit was one of resource and knowledge sharing, collaboration and community. For many trainees attending our events, it was their first time at a research conference!

The first regional Meet the Experts was very well-attended. Feedback from attendees indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to meet with expert researchers. At least one attendee said that it was the highlight of their conference!

The student and trainee social provided a space for attendees to network and socialize while enjoying food and entertainment generously supported by the INSAR Board. We thank the INSAR Board and the Regional IMFAR Committee for the opportunity to support the INSAR student membership across the globe.

Preview of INSAR 2018 Annual Meeting

Student & Trainee Events

Looking to get the most out of your experience at the INSAR Annual Meeting as a student or trainee? Keep in mind these events (in addition to the Meet the Experts Luncheon and Student Social) when it comes time to register! Hope to see you there!

Student & Trainee Workshop

- Wednesday before INSAR Annual Meeting. This year’s workshop focuses on helping student & trainees promote themselves in academia and research. Experts will provide individualized advice on crafting your C.V. and cover letter. Pre-register and look for travel grants!

Attend a Special Interest Group (SIG)

- Check out the online program before you go to see if there is a SIG that interests you! SIGs meet during the INSAR Annual Meeting and are very welcoming to students & trainees.

Resources for Students

Check out the INSAR website for information about job opportunities and funding

Career Opportunities Page!
http://www.autism-insar.org/networking/

Grant Opportunities for Students and Trainees!
Grant opportunities are available for everyone.
http://www.autism-insar.org/page/Funding

NEW Committee Members

Melissa Maye - Clinical intern, Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia

Alana McVey - Clinical psychology student, Marquette University

Alicia Montgomery - Research intern, Columbia University

Jiedi Lei - PhD student, University of Bath, UK

Sylvie Bernaerts - PhD student, University of Leuven, Belgium

Max Rolison - Medical student, Yale University

Regional Student and Trainee Committee Members

Meet the Experts

Student and Trainee Social
Student and Trainee Spotlights

This year we again received so many wonderful entries for our student spotlight, we could not choose just one! We are spotlighting some impressive work conducted by two of our fellow INSAR Student & Trainee Members by having them share their perspectives of science, research, and career development.

Brenna B. Maddox is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Pennsylvania

Q: Briefly, tell us about your research.
A: My program of research focuses on the assessment and treatment of commonly co-occurring difficulties within autism, such as anxiety and depression. I am particularly interested in issues facing adolescents and adults on the autism spectrum. My postdoctoral research, under the mentorship of Dr. David Mandell, focuses on improving community mental health services for adults with autism.

Q: If you had to describe yourself in three words, it would be...
A: Optimistic, enthusiastic, curious

Q: What are your future career goals/plans?
A: My goal is to pursue an academic research career dedicated to improving mental health services and quality of life for adults with autism by increasing the use of evidence-based practice in community settings. Following my postdoctoral fellowship, I plan to seek a faculty appointment in an academic medical center or university setting.

Q: Can you tell us about your experiences at IMFAR in the past?
A: IMFAR is my favorite conference to attend! I first attended in 2011 as a graduate student, and I have attended almost every year since. I have had a positive experience each year. I have particularly enjoyed the Early Career Preconference Workshop and the Meet the Experts Luncheon. It is terrific to have events like these that are geared toward students and trainees.

Q: What is a challenge you’ve faced in your research, and how have you overcome that?
A: I recently encountered a challenge in recruitment for my F32 study. Part of this study is to interview community mental health clinicians about their experiences, prior training, and knowledge related to adults with autism, in order to inform a clinician training program. We were struggling to connect with clinicians, and our community partners informed us that many clinicians did not want to participate because they had never worked with an adult with autism, so they did not think they would have helpful information to share with us. Once we revised our message to make clear that we want to learn from clinicians from a variety of backgrounds (including those with little to no experience with adults with autism), we have had a much improved response rate.

Emily Jane Lang is an undergraduate psychology student at the University of Texas, Austin

Q: Briefly, tell us about your research.
A: My research sought to better understand how Latina mothers cope with their child’s Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis and if ASD symptoms and maternal coping strategies are associated with maternal distress and wellbeing. Preliminary findings demonstrated that mothers who cope with their child’s ASD diagnosis by disengaging or denying the diagnosis experienced greater depression. Similarly, mothers of children with more severe ASD or greater behavioral problems showed significantly more stress. Our findings show that Latina mothers might have success in combating these stressors by using religion as a coping strategy and by enjoying positive immersion in Latina culture, as opposed to rejecting their biculturalism.

Q: If you had to describe yourself in three words, it would be...
A: Curious, compassionate, and tenacious.

Q: What are your future career goals/plans?
A: I am excited to graduate from UT Austin this December and to begin working as a project coordinator at the Anxiety and Depression Research Center at UCLA under Dr. Michelle Craske. I plan to continue studying psychopathology, ideally with a child focus. Later, I hope to pursue a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, so that I can work as a professor and independent researcher to increase understanding of this important area. As a professor and researcher, I hope to foster excitement and curiosity in future students about investigating child psychopathology, as my professors have done for me.

Q: Can you tell us about your experiences at IMFAR in the past?
A: I have not yet attended INSAR, but I am hopeful that I might be able to attend the conference in Rotterdam this year! I would love to learn about the research of the world’s foremost autism investigators from the experts themselves.

Student & Trainee Research Spotlight

The Student & Trainee committee strives to highlight the innovative and significant contributions of early career autism researchers. The selection of our Student & Trainee spotlight was determined based on blinded submissions to the INSAR website and judged by the committee on clarity, significance, and diversity.

Are you conducting research right now that you would like to share with the INSAR community? Look for the submission opportunity for our next newsletter! This is your chance to let us know about the exciting work you are contributing to the autism research community.

Tell us what you think!

The Student & Trainee Committee is dedicated to helping to provide all our early researchers with what they need to know to be successful autism researchers. Do you have a suggestion for what you’d like to see in the next newsletter? We’d love to hear it! Send it to us at studentcommittee@autism-insar.org