Letter from the Vice President of INSAR
Craig Newschaffer, Ph.D.
As this will be my last month of service on the Board, I want to let you all know what a great pleasure it has been to work with the Student and Trainee Committee (STC) over these last two years. The STC is a model committee within INSAR and your leaders are to be commended.

Here, I thought I would highlight some activities the Society has recently undertaken related to the broader dissemination of autism research. First, INSAR is now developing annual “Policy and Practice Briefs,” each focusing on a priority autism issue where sufficient evidence has emerged to inform action. These will be shared directly with key policy-makers and thought-leaders around the world (as well as with members!). The first brief is due out later this year. Next, our Society’s journal, Autism Research, will soon be integrating lay-language abstracts with scientific abstracts, so that when Journal articles are identified by non-researchers in web searches, the lay language summary will be readily visible. And, finally, this year a new INSAR Committee, the Scientific Standards Committee, has worked closely with the Communications Committee to assure that the IMFAR presentations that are highlighted at the meeting press conference represent high quality autism science as well as addressing compelling topics. I am looking forward to the Meeting in San Francisco and hope to see you there.

Early Career Networking Coffee Hour
The INSAR Board has initiated an Early Career Committee (ECC) to meet the needs of our early-career INSAR members. Early career is defined as “Faculty or non-academic professional autism researchers who are no longer students or early-stage postdocs but are still within 10 years of their terminal degree (Advanced postdocs, those beyond their first two years, are encouraged).”

Currently, there is a large gap in the support offered to early career investigators in the field. The purpose of the ECC is to: 1) respond to requests from early career members regarding resources and supports for early career that are not provided by the INSAR Student Training Committee; and 2) facilitate networking among early career INSAR members.

The ECC will be hosting a coffee hour at IMFAR 2017 on Thursday, May 11th from 12:00-1:00 pm at the Marriott Marquis Hotel Room: Nob Hill D.

Please come and meet your ECC officers! We will present data from our survey and discuss our strategic plan/initiatives. Coffee will be provided. Please bring your own lunch.

To reach the ECC, please contact us at earlycareercommittee@autism-insar.org

Look for us in San Francisco!
In conjunction with INSAR’s Board of Directors, we are hosting the following events at IMFAR 2017:

Wednesday 5/10
12:00 - 3:00 pm Early Career Preconference Workshop*
The workshop will allow early career researchers to hear about career trajectories from leaders in the field and participate in small group discussions with those experts.

Thursday, 5/11
12:15 - 1:30 pm Meet the Experts Luncheon*
This event gives students & trainees the opportunity to spend the lunch hour with leaders in the autism research community.

7:00 - 10:00 pm Student & Trainee Social
Get to know other students & trainees who are interested in autism research! Attend the free social during IMFAR to connect with other early career researchers
Event at: Thirsty Bear
661 Howard Street, San Francisco CA

Friday, 5/12
7:45 – 8:45 am Special Interest Groups (SIG)
Check the IMFAR program for a SIG that may be of interest to you. Student & Trainees are welcome!

12:15 - 1:30 pm Meet the Experts Luncheon*

Saturday, 5/13
7:45 – 8:45 am Special Interest Groups (SIG)
*
pre-registration required

Visit us at the Student & Trainee Booth!!!

Summer Institute 2017
Understanding Autism through a Cultural Lens

The INSAR Summer Institute for Autism Research 2017, Understanding Autism through a Cultural Lens, is a 6-week webinar series focused on issues related to culture and diversity in autism research.

Students and trainees are encouraged to attend sessions focused on topics such as access to services across diverse communities, cross-cultural perspectives on screening and diagnosis, and cross-cultural considerations in genetics research.

Sessions consist of a presentation on current research, followed by a question and answer session that includes a discussion about the presenter’s career development.
Student & Trainee Spotlight

Jenny Fairthorne, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of British Colombia in Vancouver, Canada was selected for our student & trainee research spotlight to share her perspective on science, research, and career development. Dr. Fairthorne received her Ph.D. from the University of Western Australia in Perth, Australia. Her research focuses on the health of mothers of children with autism and other developmental disabilities.

Q: Briefly, tell us about your research.
A: The majority of my research was using Australian data related to autism. This research is continuing and my current paper with Australian data explores the relationship between race-ethnicity, geographic location of residence and the odds of a having a child with autism. The focus of my second year in Vancouver will also be autism. I will have access to all prescriptions filled by mothers during pregnancy, maternal diagnoses of depression, along with perinatal outcomes, diagnoses of autism and other developmental disabilities in the child and detailed scores of offspring in the Early Development Instrument at age five.

Q: If you had to describe yourself in three words, it would be...
A: Enthusiastic, motivated, hard-working

Q: What are your future career goals/plans?
A: I plan to continue my autism research using linked data. In addition, I hope to contribute to autism-related research using other methods.

Q: What is a challenge you’ve faced in your research, and how have you overcome that?
A: In some ways, the first year of my fellowship in Vancouver has been a challenge. The biggest part of this challenge was leaving family and friends in Australia. Another is the time-consuming and frustrating nature of the paper work, along with the unforeseen expenses associated with transferring to another country. It was the rewards of my Canadian experience, which helped me over the hurdles. These include being part of a different research team, working with British Columbian registry data, exploring places and meeting new people in Canada and the US.

Q: From a cultural and international standpoint, what do you think is the greatest need in autism research?
A: It is important to continue exploring risk and protective factors for autism. In such ways, we will come to understand more about the many etiologies of autism and become better equipped to diagnose and develop treatments by autism sub-type. Pre-conception guidance to prospective parents via clinicians and government health promotions would assist in reducing the number of infants born with the potential to develop autism. In such ways, we will be able to reduce the prevalence and average severity of autism.

IMFAR Africa Regional Congress

We are excited to announce that the first ever Regional International Meeting for Autism Research in Africa will be held in Stellenbosch, South Africa, in September this year! The congress is titled “Nurturing our Future” and will have three main focus areas: autism spectrum disorder and related neurodevelopmental disabilities; infants, children and families; and adolescent mental health and well-being.

INSAR is partnering with the South African Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatrists and Allied Professions (SA-ACAPAP) to produce an excellent series of presentations. The conference starts with interactive workshops for early career scientists, researchers from Africa and autism stakeholders. INSAR’s Student and Trainee Committee will also be organising a Meet the Experts event and student social!

Invited speakers include David Amaral (USA), Mark Tomlinson (South Africa), Naoufel Gaddour (Tunisia), Bruno Falissard (France), Helmut Remschmidt (Germany), Olayinka Omigbodun (Nigeria), Richard Grinker (USA), Geraldine Dawson (USA), Petrus de Vries (South Africa), Christina Schwencode (Germany), John Curry (USA), Linda Theron (South Africa) and Simon Baron-Cohen (UK).

Register today! Early registration is open until June 16, 2017

Awards are available for emerging child and adolescent mental health researchers from Africa.

Dates: 7 – 9 September 2017
Location: Spier Conference Centre, Stellenbosch, South Africa

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

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PLEASE SEND ANY QUESTIONS TO: studentcommittee@autism-insar.org