Letter from the President of INSAR
One of the best parts of my role as President of INSAR is getting to know the students and trainees who have chosen to become part of our organization. Inspiring and mentoring the next generation of autism researchers has been and will continue to be a core part of INSAR’s mission. We demonstrate this through our support of student- and trainee-led events, such as the Preconference Workshop, travel awards, and mentorship activities, such as the “Meet the Experts” luncheon. Although our goal is to inspire you — the students and trainees — since you will be shaping the field of autism research in the future, in reality, it is you that inspire us with your creativity and passion. It is gratifying to be a small part of your development as an autism researcher. On behalf of the INSAR Board, we look forward to collaborating with you to make INSAR a place where students and trainees like yourselves can thrive with the goal of improving the lives of all those affected by autism spectrum disorder. I look forward to seeing you in Baltimore!

Geraldine Dawson, PhD
President of INSAR

Look for us in Baltimore!
In conjunction with INSAR’s Board of Directors, we are hosting the following events at IMFAR 2016:

**Wednesday, 5/11**
12:00 - 3:00 pm  
Early Career Preconference Workshop*  
(Room 308)

**Thursday, 5/12**
12:30 - 1:45 pm  
Meet the Experts Luncheon*  
(Rooms 302-303)
7:00 - 10:00 pm  
Student & Trainee Social  
Pratt Street Ale House  
206 W Pratt St, Baltimore

**Friday, 5/13**
12:30 - 1:45 pm  
Meet the Experts Luncheon*  
(Rooms 302-303)

*pre-registration required

Visit us at the Student & Trainee Booth!!!

Early Career Networking Lunch
Thursday, May 12  
Room 301 @ 12:30-1:45 pm  
Are you no longer a student, but still looking for career development support? Bring your lunch for an informal meeting of all early career IMFAR attendees. Faculty/nonacademic professional autism researchers (advanced postdocs also welcome) who are still within 10 years of their terminal degree are all invited to join.

Career Advice from INSAR Board Member: Francesca Happé

Q: What is the one best piece of advice that you received?
A: That’s hard! “Follow what interests you” is good advice. I’m also grateful to those who told me I didn’t have to choose between being a scientist and being a mother! But perhaps the most important advice was that it is the ability to recover from failure and knock-backs that really distinguishes those who succeed.

Q: What is one piece of advice that you wish you had received sooner?
A: That it is ok to say “no” to things — but that saying “no” quickly is much better than prevaricating!

Q: What is one thing that makes a trainee stand out as someone you would like to mentor?
A: Originality and creativity are enormously appealing, of course — but I’m a sucker for a good sense of humour! In the past I’ve also taken people on because of their passion and commitment to under-served groups in autism research (e.g., individuals with ASD and severe intellectual impairments; older adults with ASD).

Q: What is one hard-won professional insight that you pass on to your advisees?
A: As your career develops and you take on more and more roles, responsibilities and projects, you need to be nimble about deciding what you are going to drop. You can’t do everything, but you want to make yourself free for the things you really love to do, as well as those you have to do.

Q: What is your most successful technique for networking with other professionals?
A: I don’t think I’m particularly good at networking, and it is certainly hard to go to all of those occasions after work when you need to get home to your kids! I do enjoy talking to people and hearing about their passions, however — so maybe endless curiosity is a little asset! I also enjoy trying to connect people who I think will have interesting ideas and synergies to share — I think I caught that from Uta [Frith] — and I also encourage my students to contact people (however senior) whose work they enjoy; very few people turn down the opportunity to talk about what they find fascinating!

Did you enjoy your experience at IMFAR 2016? Join us again next year May 10-13, 2017 in San Francisco, CA!
Q: Tell us about your research.
A: A significant portion of individuals with ASD have gastrointestinal (GI) problems, but the cause isn’t clear. Research suggests that children with ASD as well as those with GI problems without ASD tend to have a dysregulated stress response. Therefore, it is possible that individuals with ASD and GI problems have a dysregulated stress response. My research focuses on studying immune, endocrine, physiological, and psychological indices of stress as they relate to GI dysfunction in ASD. My goal is to translate our findings into better treatments to improve the quality of life for these individuals.

Q: If you had to describe yourself in three words, it would be...
A: Abstract, observant, nocturnal

Q: What is the best piece of advice that was given to you regarding how to network at professional conferences?
A: Open up the program guide a few days prior to the conference and search for people doing research that interests you. Contact them through email (keep it short), and see if they are willing to meet up for coffee or lunch. Or, just let them know you think their research is cool and say you look forward to meeting them at their poster or talk. It’s great to have lunch and dinner with your lab mates and friends at conferences, but be open to inviting new friends and colleagues to eat with you.

Q: What are your future career goals/plans?
A: After a postdoctoral fellowship, I plan to continue teaching and conducting research to improve the quality of life for those with ASD.

Q: What advice would you give to individuals looking to pursue their doctorates regarding networking and initiating involvement in research activities?
A: Get involved with research early in your academic career. Join a lab as a research assistant. If you can, work on multiple projects, or even join a second lab if you have time. Always be updating your CV with your experiences and skills learned. Also, never give up. Some days will be great, and some days will be terrible, but keep pushing and things will eventually work out.

Networking at IMFAR
We’re always told about the importance of networking at conferences, but what does that really mean, and how do you do it? We did a little digging, and here’s what we learned!

1. Plan in advance. Like Brad mentioned in his response, check out the program book in advance and contact people you’re interested in meeting.

2. Ask questions. Remember, networking is not about you, but about others and how you can work together.

3. Develop a panel to submit. It’s never too late to start planning for next year – if you find researchers with similar interests to yours, you can talk to them and start to plan a panel submission for next year!

4. Make introductions. If you’re in a group, and you see someone who might not know everyone, introduce them! There are times you don’t know everyone, and this makes a big difference. It works both ways!

5. Come to the student social and stop by our booth. You can meet peers, and form friendships and collaborations for the future!

Q: Tell us about your research.
A: The overarching goal of my research is to determine how early social impairment, at varying degrees, unfolds over time. I want to understand the developmental relationships between specific social attention skills (i.e. social orienting, joint attention, and attention to distress) in order to determine if these skills build incrementally upon each other during the first few years of life. I am also interested in determining how early social attention deficits impact children’s social responsiveness and initiations (i.e. response to distress, prosocial behaviors, and initiating joint attention) later in development. Identifying the onset and developmental course of these skills, in the context of social impairment, will inform optimal time frames and target areas for early intervention.

Q: If you had to describe yourself in three words, it would be...
A: Passionate, inquisitive, persistent

Q: What are your future career goals/plans?
A: My future career goal is to become an independent investigator and educator. I hope to build upon my doctoral research in order to understand more about the developmental trajectories of social impairment observed in ASD. From this research, I want to develop early prevention and intervention resources to optimize social development in young children affected by ASD symptoms. I would also like to teach about developmental disabilities and mentor students in pursuit of research and clinical careers focused on ASD.

Q: Have you attended IMFAR in the past? If so, tell about your experience at this conference.
A: I have had the pleasure of attending IMFAR three times before. After each conference, I felt inspired. The thought-provoking research presentations often lead me to write frantically about new questions to research, new strategies to implement, and alternative interpretations to consider in relation to my research. The most influential sessions are those outside of my normal area of expertise that challenge me to consider alternative approaches. Lastly, my most memorable experiences at IMFAR have been reconnecting with friends and colleagues and making new connections.

RENEW YOUR INSAR STUDENT MEMBERSHIP EACH FALL TO CONTINUE RECEIVING ALL MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS, INCLUDING THIS NEWSLETTER! FIND FULL MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION ONLINE AT: WWW.AUTISM-INSAR.ORG

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

Networks & Trainee Committee
Vanessa Hus Bal, Chair – Postdoc, UCSF
Carolyn McCormick, Co-Chair – Postdoc, Brown
Allison Meyer, Secretary – Grad student, UNC-CH
Michele Villalobos, Faculty mentor – Asst Professor UNC; Director TEACCH Asheville Center

Members
Marika Coffman – Grad student, Virginia Tech
Kristina Cottle – Grad student, University of Utah
Laura G. Holmes – Grad student, University of Utah
Michelle Hoogenhout – Grad student, University of Cape Town
Patrick Powell – Grad student, UNC-CH
Debra Prykanowski – Grad student, University of Florida
Ashley Stevens – Grad student, University of Utah

Local Volunteers
Luke Kalb – Grad student, Johns Hopkins
Lydia Stewart – Grad student, Johns Hopkins

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

Newsletter editor: Marika Coffman; Newsletter Staff: Laura G. Holmes & Debra Prykanowski
All students and trainees are invited to join us for an evening of informal socializing and networking among students and trainees actively engaged in autism research. Food is free! Alcoholic beverages are available for purchase. No ticket required.

**WHEN:** Thursday, May 12th @ 7:00 PM  
(Directly following the poster reception)

**WHERE:** Pratt Street Ale House  
206 West Pratt Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
(Across the street from Convention Center)

**MENU:** Free Food! Cash Bar!  
Nacho bar! Baltimore crab dishes, beef and chicken satay, hummus, vegetable crudité, assorted cheeses and tapenades!