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**INSAR**

International Society for Autism Research
It is an honor and a pleasure to serve as president of the International Society for Autism Research (INSAR). It has provided me opportunities to meet many new people, including students, researchers, sponsors, advocates, and those affected by autism spectrum disorder (ASD). I want to acknowledge the hard work of many volunteers who make INSAR possible, including the INSAR board members, committee chairs, annual meeting program chair, and scientific program chairs. Our success depends on the support of our sponsors and the organizations, including Association Resources and Conference Direct, who are responsible for the day-to-day operations behind INSAR. I am inspired by the passion and commitment of each of these groups and how, together, we are promoting the field of autism research with the goal of making a positive difference for people with ASD.

We are delighted to have this opportunity to share with you our accomplishments of 2015. One of those accomplishments was updating INSAR’s strategic plan. The strategic planning process solicited input from INSAR membership, chairs and members of committees, and those affected directly by ASD. One of the changes made when updating our strategic plan was to revise our mission statement. The new mission statement represents INSAR’s strong commitment to rigorous science and our belief that the maturing field of autism research is poised to have an increasing impact on policy and practice.

The updated strategic plan includes and expands upon five strategic initiatives that comprised the previous strategic plan. Two new strategic initiatives were added. The first focuses on our goal of disseminating autism research to have broader impact in shaping research priorities, policy, practice, and public understanding. The second reflects a desire to foster communication between autism researchers and those affected by ASD. We believe that a strong partnership with those affected by autism is critical for conducting high quality, meaningful research and translating that research into real world benefit. The following are INSAR’s Strategic Initiatives:

- Setting the Bar – Increase the quality of research promoted through its annual meeting, journal, and other activities
- Interdisciplinary and Translational – Cultivate interdisciplinary and translational research, public-private partnerships, and relationships with industry
- Diverse and Global – Increasingly represent and serve a diverse and global community
- Next Generation – Foster opportunities for leadership and career development for the next generation of ASD researchers
- Building Identity – Promote INSAR as the premier society for autism researchers
- Research to Practice – Disseminate science-based knowledge to inform research priorities, public policy, professional practice, and public understanding
- Partnerships – Foster communication between autism researchers and individuals affected by autism spectrum disorder

Geraldine Dawson, PhD, President
Our global focus is a vital part of INSAR’s aim to improve the lives of all those affected by autism through the highest quality research.

INSAR is committed to increasing the numbers of international researchers attending our annual meeting, and benefiting from Society membership year-round. We offer reduced membership fees for individuals from low and middle income countries ($10/$5 for non-students from low/lower-middle income countries) who can also register for IMFAR at reduced rates.

In 2015, we saw the highest ever number of applications for INSAR’s Diversity and Professionals from Low Income Countries travel awards, and a total of 30 will be awarded (at a total cost of $39,000) to enable researchers from across the globe, and from under-served communities, to attend IMFAR 2016.

INSAR’s Cultural Diversity Committee (co-chaired by Marshalyn Yeargin-Allsopp, Sandra Vanegas and Alexia Rattazzi) works hard throughout the year to represent the interests and needs of this global autism research community, ensure international members are included and welcomed at IMFAR, and advance research on diverse groups affected by ASD.

In 2015, the Cultural Diversity Committee’s work included reviewing all abstracts for IMFAR to identify and flag those with a diversity element; hosting our first annual Happy Hour at IMFAR 2015 to welcome over 50 attendees from 14 countries across the globe; and organizing the Cultural Diversity Luncheon at IMFAR 2015 to provide networking opportunities to international attendees. In addition, subcommittees have been formed to move forward a number of initiatives, including a panel of talks for IMFAR 2016 (“Understanding Cultural Differences in Diagnostic and Treatment Services for Children with ASD”), planning a preconference workshop highlighting new research on cultural diversity and autism, exploring the creation of summer internships, and proposing a new Cultural Diversity research award. All the activities of the Committee, as well as relevant news in the autism research community, are communicated to more than 150 people worldwide via the Cultural Diversity Committee’s quarterly newsletter.

INSAR is keen to reach parts of the world where it is not yet viable to hold IMFAR. For the first time, in 2015, we held a Regional IMFAR meeting, having considered some wonderful proposals from around the world in response to an open invitation for bids in spring 2014. The first ever Regional IMFAR was held November 6-8 in Shanghai, China in partnership with Children’s Hospital of Fudan University, Autism Speaks, China Women’s Development Fund, and the Shanghai Federation of Disability. Yonghao Gui, Vice-President of Fudan University and Dean of Shanghai Medical College, and Guoying Huang, President of Children’s Hospital of Fudan University, were honorary chairs of the meeting. The meeting executive chair was Yi Wang, Vice-President of Children’s Hospital of Fudan University.
We especially want to acknowledge the leadership and efforts of the organizing committee, co-chaired by Yong-Hui Jiang of Duke University, Andy Shih from Autism Speaks, and Hailiang Guo, Director of China Women’s Development Fund. Past INSAR president Helen Tager-Flusberg and Xiu Xu from Children’s Hospital of Fudan University helped oversee the program committee, which included representatives from throughout the Asia Pacific region and the US.

The excitement on the opening day was palpable. There were over 700 attendees from more than 30 countries, with approximately 265 people coming from outside China. Over the course of 21 sessions, we heard from 95 speakers. Among the highlights were keynote presentations by Mu-ming Poo, who described the China Brain Project and its implications for understanding autism, and Matthew State, who provided an overview of research on the genomics and biology of autism. Both professionals and families enjoyed a series of master courses on a wide range of topics, ranging from screening and early intervention to adolescent and adult services and supports. Over 150 parents attended these courses by experts in the field, which were offered free of charge through INSAR’s support. These courses were live-streamed with simultaneous translation, and videos of many of the talks will be available via the INSAR website.

There was certainly a great buzz at the conference and much enthusiasm. Twenty-three media outlets covered the event, including radio, newspaper, and TV. The conference was widely publicized on WeChat, China’s mobile messaging system. During the breaks, scientists from across the globe shared ideas and formed new collaborations. We are in the process of gathering more concrete information about the impact of the event. If these results are as positive as our impressions of this first regional IMFAR, we hope to hold more such meetings in the future, in partnership with local organizations and in response to regional priorities.

Francesca Happé

*INSAR Past-President and Board Liaison to the Cultural Diversity Committee, with special responsibility for Global Reach*

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**MEMBERSHIP TYPES**

**FULL MEMBERSHIP**

For full membership, an individual must have a graduate degree from an accredited university, have publications in peer reviewed journals related to autism research, and/or have external funding for autism related research. In addition, an individual may have other scientific credentials that they wish to submit to the membership committee for review. This membership type is a voting member.

**STUDENT MEMBERSHIP**

Student applicants must be enrolled in an undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, graduate, postgraduate, or postdoctoral training program involving autism related research at an accredited university. This membership type is a voting member.

**AFFILIATE MEMBERSHIP**

Affiliate membership status is available for non-students, including community stakeholders such as families and individuals living with autism, who do not (yet) meet membership requirements, but wish to enjoy the benefits of membership, save voting privileges.

**NOTE**

Applicants from Low-Income and Middle-Income countries qualify for a largely reduced membership dues fee and annual meeting (IMFAR) registration rates.
INSAR’s efforts in this area are spearheaded by the Student and Trainee Committee (STC), whose members, as the name implies, are all students or trainees. The INSAR Vice-President serves as the liaison between this committee and the Board. The Society is fortunate to have a well-organized and active STC, whose initiatives are focused on increasing student and trainee access to quality mentoring, training and networking opportunities at IMFAR and throughout the year. The STC also seeks to keep students and trainees updated about opportunities for travel awards, grants, scholarships and fellowships.

This past year the STC focused on planning, organizing and implementing several key initiatives.

**Meet the Experts IMFAR Sessions:** These lunchtime events, held at the IMFAR meeting in Salt Lake City, provided students with direct access to leaders in the field of autism research for informal conversation and networking. More than 150 students and trainees and 20 senior researchers participated.

**Early Career Pre-IMFAR Conference Workshop:** This day-long workshop was held on the Wednesday before the Salt Lake City meeting. The workshop focused on student grant writing (thesis and other small grant opportunities) with speakers from the academic and federal and non-federal grant-making communities. More than 70 students and trainees participated with 10 students receiving travel awards from the Society to help cover the costs of traveling to the conference early.

**Summer Institute 2015:** This year INSAR launched its inaugural virtual Summer Institute – a series of six weekly summertime webinars geared toward students, postdoctoral fellows, and early career researchers interested in autism spectrum disorders. The Summer Institute provides an excellent opportunity for students and trainees who are unable to attend the annual meeting to connect with each other and leading researchers. Presenters included Joseph Buxbaum, Cathy Lord and Kevin Pelphry. In addition to an overview lecture, the webinar includes a virtual Q&A session, moderated by STC members. The inaugural Summer Institute engaged more than 1,200 unique participants (each participant attended an average of four sessions). The Summer Institute will have its second iteration in 2016 with sessions built around the theme of “Familial Aspects of ASD.”

The STC also supports INSAR’s goals of engaging and informing students and trainees by distributing a biannual newsletter (launched this year), maintaining an active presence at the IMFAR meeting (including a student booth and social events), conducting periodic student and trainee member surveys, and connecting with the international student and trainee attendees of Regional IMFAR meetings.
INSAR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
The Lifetime Achievement Award is presented annually by the Executive Board of the International Society for Autism Research. This award acknowledges an individual who has made significant fundamental contributions to research on autism spectrum disorders that have had a lasting impact on the field. The focus of the awardee’s research can be in any discipline.

The 2015 Awardee was Laura Schreibman, PhD from University of California, San Diego.

INSAR ADVOCATE AWARD
This award honors community members and advocates who have influenced the ability to carry out autism research.

This year’s award went to Merry Barua who is the founder and director of Action for Autism (AFA), the National Center for Autism, the leading autism society in India.

SLIFKA/RITVO INNOVATION IN AUTISM RESEARCH AWARD
The Alan B. Slifka Foundation promotes innovative research on autism spectrum disorders conducted by junior investigators. The purpose of the award is to lead to new treatments and improvements in the quality of life of individuals with autism.

This year’s award went to Oleksandr Shcheglovitov from University of Utah for his project titled, “Understanding the mechanisms of IGF1’s action on human neurons in health and disorders associated with autism.”

DISSERTATION AWARDS
Dissertation Awards are presented annually to scientists and clinicians in training in all areas of autism research. Awards are for the best dissertation on autism accepted by the applicant’s university in the year 2014.

The 2015 awardees were:
Vanessa Hus Bal from University of California, San Francisco for her dissertation titled “Toward a better understanding and improved validity of autism symptom measures across the lifespan.”
Dissertation Awards continued

**Shulamite Green** from University of Michigan for her dissertation titled, “Thalamo-cortical underconnectivity during sensory stimulation in youth with ASD.”

**Katherine Stavropoulos** from University of California, San Diego for her dissertation titled, “Toward a better understanding of the reward system in autism spectrum disorders: Empirical tests of the social motivation hypothesis.”

Young Investigator Awards

Young Investigator Awards are presented for the best empirical research papers on autism published or in press in 2014, by an investigator who has been awarded their PhD or MD in the past seven years.

The awards went to:

**Sarah Cassidy**, Coventry University for her article in The Lancet Psychiatry, titled “Suicidal ideation and suicide plans or attempts in adults with Asperger’s syndrome attending a specialist diagnostic clinic: A clinical cohort study.”

**Brian O’Roak**, Oregon Health & Science University for his article in Nature Communications, titled “Recurrent de novo mutations implicate novel genes underlying simplex autism risk.”

**Ryan Stevenson**, University of Toronto for his article in The Journal of Neuroscience, titled “Multisensory temporal integration in autism spectrum disorders.”

Diversity Awards

Diversity travel awards are presented to individuals who are currently members of INSAR, studying or working in autism research in health-related institutions, universities, public agencies or other stakeholder-related activities. The purpose of the awards is to increase participation of individuals currently underrepresented in the biomedical, clinical, behavioral and social sciences including individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups in developed countries and individuals with disabilities, including ASD.

In 2015, 10 awards were given.
PROFESSIONALS FROM LOW INCOME COUNTRIES AWARDS
Professionals from Low Income Countries Awards are presented to individuals who are currently members of INSAR, studying or working in autism research in health-related institutions, universities, public agencies or other stakeholder-related activities who live in low or middle income countries. The purpose of this award is to increase participation in autism research across the globe, including in countries with limited resources.
In 2015, 10 awards were given.

STUDENT TRAVEL AWARDS
Student Travel Awards are available to graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and medical students and residents actively engaged in autism research. First priority is given to students who are presenting their own original research at IMFAR 2015 and received the highest abstract scores.
In 2015, 55 awards were given.

EARLY CAREER WORKSHOP TRAVEL AWARDS
Up to 15 Early Career Development Workshop Travel Awards were presented to current Student members who will be attending IMFAR 2015 and the Early Career Workshop (prior to IMFAR).
In 2015, 10 awards were given.

FUTURE EVENTS
The International Meeting for Autism Research (IMFAR) was convened for the first time in November 2001, to provide ASD researchers from around the world with a focused opportunity to share the rapidly moving scientific investigation of ASD.
INSAR / IMFAR does not offer continuing education credits.

Save the dates for future IMFAR events which are listed below.
Find details on our website at www.autism-isans.org.

IMFAR 2017
May 10 - May 13
Marriott Marquis
San Francisco, California

IMFAR 2018
May 9 - May 12
de Doelen ICC Rotterdam
Rotterdam, Netherlands

IMFAR 2019
May 1 - May 4
Palais des congres de Montreal
Montreal, Canada

IMFAR 2020
May 6 - May 9
Washington Convention Center
Seattle, Washington
Autism Research, is the flagship journal of INSAR, was launched in 2008. The journal was initially published six times annually. However, due to the high number of quality submissions, in 2016 the journal moved to publication monthly. Beginning in 2015, the journal transitioned to an online-only format.

Current INSAR members receive an online subscription of the journal as a benefit of membership. One sample issue is available as open access to all visitors to the journal website.

In 2015, Autism Research underwent a transition in editorial oversight. The founding Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Anthony Bailey, was succeeded by Dr. David G. Amaral. At the same time, a group of returning and new Associate Editors were established: Dr. Evdokia Anagnostou, Dr. Ralph-Axel Müller, Dr. Peter Mundy, Dr. Craig Newschaffer, Dr. James Sutcliffe and Dr. Jeremy Veenstra-VanderWeele.

Autism Research continues to show increased growth year-to-year, based on a number of publishing metrics. As indicated in the table below, there was a 16% increase in the number of papers submitted to the journal in 2015 compared to 2014.

Efforts have been made to shorten the time to first decision and the editors thank those members of the autism research community who have provided timely reviews of the submitted papers. As indicated in the table below, processing time has been cut nearly in half over the last year. The Editors are committed to continued improvement in this metric of journal processing.

The articles published in Autism Research continue to be an important resource to researchers worldwide. There has been a steady increase in downloads of published papers with a 33% increase in 2015 alone (table below).

The primary goals for 2016 include:
1) continuing to increase the quality of published papers; 2) insuring that Autism Research publishes papers from investigators located throughout the worldwide community of autism researchers, 3) and broadening the content areas of published papers. One means of accomplishing these goals is by expanding the representation of scientists on the Editorial Board, a process that is currently under way.

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TREASURER'S REPORT

INSAR, a US not for profit organization, is a financially healthy organization that has seen consistent financial growth since its inception.

In 2015 INSAR witnessed continued strength in revenues and a plateau in expenses. Since 2009, the year in which the current budgeting and planning system was set in place, primary revenue drivers were dues, sponsorship, and exhibitors. Drivers for expenses were primarily administrative and website fees and the costs of a variety of projects, such as the Summer Institute and pre-conference workshop. (Figure 1)

Along with continued healthy financial stability over the past several years, we’ve seen consistent strength in membership for both full and student members. (Figure 2)

In 2015, INSAR implemented an investment policy, which was developed and approved in 2014. In accordance with the investment policy, an investment management company, UBS Financial Services, was selected to advise and manage the investment portfolio under the supervision of INSAR’s finance committee, which meets three to four times annually. In compliance with the investment policy, the INSAR portfolio is conservative and diversified, a sound approach during this period of market volatility. As indicated in the Statement of Financial Position (Figure 3), the organization remains financially strong. Coupled with a financially healthy organization is INSAR’s clearly outlined approach for fund allocation and management of resources. (Figure 4)

Many of our assets have been generated from annual IMFAR meeting revenues and will be translated into the support for INSAR special projects, such as student and trainee workshops, travel awards, the regional meetings, and other activities that are consistent with our mission.

In 2016, several new budgeted projects are planned as an outcome of the fall 2015 strategic planning meeting. The vision for the 2016 budget reflects INSAR’s mission to promote the highest quality autism research primarily through support of IMFAR, the Summer Institute, our flagship journal and several additional new projects that are part of the updated INSAR strategic plan.
The 14th annual International Meeting for Autism Research (IMFAR) was held in May 2015, in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. Reflecting the vigor of the international autism research community, 1,225 presentations were highlighted during the conference, including four keynote lectures, a lifetime achievement award address, 20 panel presentations, 120 oral presentations, and 1,020 poster presentations. Presenters came from over 40 countries across the globe to discuss the full range of autism research, including diagnostic, behavioral and intellectual assessment, social behavior and social cognition, communication and language, cognition and attention, repetitive behaviors and interests, early development, adult outcome, behavioral and pharmacological interventions across the lifespan, brain structure and function, genetics, animal models, molecular biology, comorbid syndromes, epidemiology, services, family issues, new technologies, and perspectives across cultures and countries. All of the keynote lectures and a subset of the panel presentations were videotaped and are available for viewing on the INSAR website.

IMFAR 2015 opened with a very successful press conference, with coverage by the local ABC, CBS, Fox and Univision affiliates as well as the Salt Lake Tribune, CNN, TIME, Forbes, HealthDay, Medscape and other national media. In total, we achieved over 328 million media impressions in 2015, up from 212 million in 2014. Social media activity surrounding IMFAR was also quite vigorous. We reached almost 43,000 people via Facebook, and there were 5,469 tweets about IMFAR, including tweets from Rosie O’Donnell and a member of the Canadian parliament. The annual Twitter #IMFARChat, hosted by SFARI, was more popular than ever, with 176 participants, over 1,400 tweets, and almost 6.6 million impressions.
IMFAR 2015 introduced several innovations to the conference format. Keynote speakers were invited to assemble Keynote Panel Sessions, bringing together experts to deliver outstanding talks converging on a shared topic. By pairing these panels with keynote subjects, these thematic panels encouraged in-depth discussion of the issues raised by our renowned speakers and enabled a wider range of viewpoints to be represented. To allow for more topics to be represented in the limited number of oral sessions, oral sessions were reconfigured into groups of four instead of groups of eight. This allowed us to hold an oral session in each of the 20 topic areas to which abstracts are submitted. IMFAR 2015 continued the popular evening poster sessions with light hors d’oeuvres and lunchtime poster sessions with food kiosks nearby, offering opportunities for scientific discussion in a relaxed, social setting. As in previous years, opportunities for socializing and networking also occurred in the context of a lovely opening reception in the Grand America’s beautifully manicured center courtyard, as well as morning coffee hours, a cultural diversity happy hour, and a student member social. Student “Meet the Experts” Roundtable Luncheons enabled junior members to consult with more senior faculty. Additional luncheons included the Cultural Diversity Networking Luncheon and the Community Advisory Committee Stakeholder Luncheon.

Special Interest Groups were convened to provide opportunities for like-minded researchers to discuss topics of increasing focus in autism research. These included groups focused on: Creating Patient Centric Information Commons for Autism Research; Anxiety in Autism: Mechanisms, Measurement, and Treatment; Minimally Verbal Individuals; Technology and Autism; Approaching Adulthood: Translational and Vocational Issues in ASD; Implementing and Evaluating Community-Based Early Intervention; ASD and Sex Offenses: Guidance for the Criminal Justice System; Multiple Risk Factors for ASD: Genetic Predisposition and Environmental Influences.

**DASHBOARD REPORT**

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January 2014 Instituted Application Fee & Deadline

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