

Letter From the INSAR President to Students and Trainees:

Students and trainees who have chosen to be part of the INSAR community have often surmounted many academic and personal challenges to pursue their careers. However, in 2020 you face the uniquely difficult and, at times, inexplicable challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Plans for data collection, travel, training, and jobs that may have had a sense of certainty a few months ago may no longer be assumed. However, even in the face of what amounts to a slow moving, world-wide natural disaster, your achievements to this point indicate that you have the talent, persistence, and patience necessary for success in science. Make no mistake, your unfailing confidence in your own abilities is vital. You are essential to the continuation of the quality of autism science that will achieve the society's goal of improving the lives of all people affected by autism! We have a long way to go to fully achieve this goal. The achievement of INSAR's goals will require the very considerable abilities and efforts of your generation of researchers, as well as generations yet to come.



For the science of autism to realize its ultimate goal, you will have to plumb the mysteries of work-life balance. Usually, that means the balance between work and personal lives, but it also means dealing with challenges in life, like disasters, that make the accomplishment of work goals unexpectedly difficult or require more time to achieve. It goes without saying that disasters are stressful. However, it's sometimes necessary to remind yourself and one another to be mindful of stress and take care of yourself accordingly when meeting the challenges of a disaster, especially the longer it endures. If your motivation flags, or anxiety surges, recognize that you're not alone—this is a crisis for everyone. Practice nonjudgment of yourself and others and do the best you can. Focus on things you can control, stay connected to your community of peers and mentors. Seek help and advice from mentors or others whenever it is needed and help others when you can. Your generation of students and trainees face a unique set of challenges, but you are more important to INSAR than you may realize. The future of INSAR and autism science is yours to shape. To be sure, your talents, combined with persistence and patience, can even get you through this pandemic!

All the best and stay well,

Peter Mundy

President, International Society for Autism Research

Please find resources from Dr. Mundy on the final page

INSAR's Meet-the-Experts Event is Going Virtual!

The INSAR Meet-the-Experts (MTE) luncheon is hosted by the INSAR Student and Trainee Committee (STC), usually held during the INSAR Annual Meeting. Due to the cancelation of the in-person Annual Meeting this year, the STC is excited to offer a series of five virtual MTE events across three dates delivered by teleconference in late July! INSAR student members can meet with the autism expert of their choice at a virtual roundtable event. Experts will share experiences from their career, research from their laboratory, and advice on building a successful research career.

Tuesday, July 28th:

Dr. Sarah Cassidy at 9:00am PT
Dr. Peter Mundy time TBD

Wednesday, July 29th:

Dr. Helen Tager-Flusberg at 12:00pm PT

Thursday, July 30th:

Dr. Laura Anthony at 10:00am PT
Dr. Christina Nicolaidis at 2:00pm PT

Registration is required and seats are limited. Registration will open soon, look out for an email from INSAR. People who registered for a table at the in-person MTE will not be automatically registered. The events will not be recorded for later viewing. Registration is limited to INSAR students and trainees.

We hope you will join us for the virtual MTE event!

2020 INSAR Institute: Developmental Stages of Autism through a Research Lens

The 2020 INSAR Institute is a webinar series about factors that influence autistic individuals' transition through different life stages, integrating research and clinical practice. Each session will include a presentation by an expert followed by a Q&A session.

Date	Speaker	Topic
June 11 th	Dr. Cathy Lord	Autistic individuals across the lifespan
June 18 th	Dr. Jonathan Green	Autism in early childhood
June 25 th	Dr. Peter Mundy	Symptom continuity from infancy to adolescence
July 2 nd	Drs. Bradley Cox, Brett Nachman, Jiedi Lei	Transition to college/university for autistic students
July 9 th	Drs. Mark Brosnan, Chris Ashwin, Lee Corless	Transition to employment and independence in adulthood
July 16 th	Dr. Laura Klinger	Aging and the transition to older adulthood for autistic individuals

To attend, create or use your existing myINSAR profile at autism-insar.com and register at <https://www.autism-insar.org/event/SI2020Reg>. Each session will be recorded and available to current INSAR members following the series.

Registration is free and available worldwide to those interested in autism research!

Student & Trainee Committee Statement:

Recent atrocities, namely, the murder of Black people at the hands of the police in the U.S., highlight racism at all levels. Our Student and Trainee Committee is largely composed of members from the U.S., although some of our members live in Europe, Australia, and Asia. We understand that racism occurs worldwide, and it is everyone's responsibility to work to dismantle it. Sparked by the death of George Floyd and the ensuing Black Lives Matter protests across the world, our committee has been reflecting on our own complacency--and thus complicity--in upholding systems of oppression. Together, as the next generation of autism research leaders, we must educate ourselves and work to advocate for antiracist systems. We urge our student and trainee members to do the same. To bring this issue to the forefront within the autism research community, we commit to highlighting multicultural and intersectional autism research across our initiatives. We will also work with the INSAR Board to develop structures for recruiting and supporting Black students and trainees. The STC stands in solidarity with BLM and supports the INSAR Board's statement.

A Student's Perspective on Research in a Time of Social Distancing



Gerber, 5th year Clinical Psychology doctoral student at Stony Brook University studying under Dr. Matthew Lerner

As my university started to shut down around mid-March, I began to get nervous. Several of the fifth-year students in my program were forced to end data collection for their dissertation early. I had planned to defend my own dissertation proposal in the next couple of months, but what if I could no longer complete the study? This was supposed to be my chance to develop into an independent researcher and finally collect and analyze my own data. I already had a plan for my dissertation proposal. What would happen to the work I have already put in? What would happen to the funding I already have been awarded to run the study? I spoke with my advisor about ways to run the study online. Although it seemed possible, I would have to cut out any in-person assessments. And even more challenging, what if we began data collection exclusively online, but restrictions were lifted a few months into the study?

Around the same time, I had an idea for another study. My advisor and I quickly applied for COVID-19 related funding and were fortunate to receive an internal grant to fund the study. We plan to follow previous study participants from the lab over the course of several months to understand the psychosocial impact of mandatory isolation. I will now likely use this data as the basis for my dissertation. Although this was highly unexpected, I took away a few lessons. First, it may be possible to repurpose the skills you already have or modify your original ideas. Second, you may need to actively seek collaborations. This study will produce more data than I can analyze, and I hope that it will be helpful for students in the department who will now need data for their master's thesis. Finally, if you have a good idea, you can always pocket it for later. Perhaps save it for another grant proposal. Just because you cannot do it now, does not mean you cannot do it.

Note: Alan Gerber is a member of the INSAR Student & Trainee Committee.

INSAR's Inaugural Autistic Researchers Committee!

Earlier this year, the International Society for Autism Research (INSAR) unanimously appointed its inaugural Autistic Researchers Committee.

The aims of the Autistic Researchers Committee are to 1) better integrate autistic members into INSAR programs, 2) to foster scientific career development for autistic autism researchers, 3) to create opportunities for autistic scientists to offer their insights to non-autistic researchers and colleagues, 4) to make INSAR conferences more accommodating and welcoming for autistic attendees, 5) to promote the inclusion of and consideration for issues important to autistic people in INSAR meetings and in overall autism research across the sciences, social sciences, humanities, education, and other disciplines, 6) and to advise the INSAR Board on issues important to autistic people.

The newly appointed committee members, all of whom are autistic and many of whom are INSAR students and trainees, include **BOARD LIAISON: John Elder Robison** (he/him), Neurodiversity Scholar in Residence, William and Mary College; **CO-CHAIR: Patrick Dwyer** (he/him), PhD Student, UC Davis; **CO-CHAIR: TC Waisman** (she/her) EdD Student, University of Calgary; **Dena L. Gassner** (she/her), PhD Candidate, Adelphi University, Adjunct Faculty, Towson University, National Board Member for The Arc US; **Jac den Houting** (they/them), Postdoctoral Research Associate, Macquarie University; **Steven Kapp** (he/him), Lecturer, University of Portsmouth; **Brett Ranon Nachman** (he/him), PhD Candidate, University of Wisconsin-Madison; **Dora M. Raymaker** (they/them/any), Research Assistant Professor, Portland State University / Regional Research Institute for Human Services; **Stephen Mark Shore** (he/him), Clinical Assistant Professor of Special Education, Adelphi University; Adjunct Professor of Occupational Therapy, New York University

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted some of the committee's work (such as plans to enhance sensory accessibility of INSAR poster sessions and plans to create a social space for autistic people at INSAR), but the committee looks forward to collaborating with INSAR members. Despite the cancellation of this year's INSAR annual meeting in Seattle, the Autistic Researchers Committee is exploring options for hosting a virtual workshop in August or September 2020 to introduce the committee and discuss autistic contributions to autism research. This virtual workshop will include opportunities for attendees to contribute ideas about how the committee can contribute towards enhancing autistic involvement in research. Further details are forthcoming!

Interested in joining the INSAR Student & Trainee Committee?

We are looking for passionate new members who want to help support their fellow students and trainees. We would like to increase representation among students and trainees outside of North America and those with backgrounds in the basic and medical sciences. Email us at studentcommittee@autism-insar.org with questions and be on the lookout for an application from INSAR. Applicants must be INSAR student members.

COVID-19-Related Resources for the Autism Community

Resources from INSAR President, Dr. Peter Mundy for Students and Trainees:

- <https://www.apa.org/topics/covid-19/student-stress>
- <https://www.sfn.org/initiatives/confronting-covid-19>
- <https://www.chronicle.com/article/For-Many-Graduate-Students/248360>
- <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/07/graduate-students-look-for-time-degree-and-funding-extensions-during-covid-19>
- <https://www.srctd.org/event/home-child-experts-science-stress-and-coping-during-covid-19>

Resources for funding for Students and Trainees:

- American Psychological Association (APA) Scholarships, Grants, & Awards:
<https://www.apa.org/about/awards/search?dateFrom=03%2F27%2F2020&dateTo=06%2F26%2F2020&RecipientType=Students%2C+Graduate&sort=AwardDeadlineSort+asc&AwardDeadlineSort+asc>
- Autism Science Foundation grant for early career investigators to help pivot research projects that were diverted due to the pandemic: <https://autismsciencefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Pivot-2020.pdf>

Resources for Students and Trainees:

- APA is offering free full membership for students who just completed their doctorates:
<https://pages.apa.org/newdoctorates/>
- ASF has a Facebook page for Early Career autism researchers (including students) you can join:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1868582240033938/>

Resources for Autistic People and Families:

- Autism Society of North Carolina Resource Page: <https://www.autismsociety-nc.org/coronavirus-disease-2019/>
- UCLA Center for Autism Research & Treatment COVID-19 Information:
<https://www.semel.ucla.edu/autism/covid-19-information>
- Autism Science Foundation COVID-19 Resources for Families:
<https://autismsciencefoundation.org/covid-19-resources/the-autism-science-foundation-covid-19-family-resource-center/>
- Autism Science Foundation Webinars on topics such as resiliency, employment challenges for autistic adults, managing trauma, self-care, and telehealth: <https://autismsciencefoundation.org/covid-19-resources/asf-covid-19-webinar-series/>