IT’S THAT TIME AGAIN!

THE INSAR annual scientific meeting convenes each May, to exchange and disseminate new scientific progress among autism researchers, students, and trainees from around the world. This year marks the 20th Anniversary of INSAR, and the 2021 Annual Meeting will be a landmark virtual event that will provide access to on-demand content until June 7th 2021. Although you need to have (or create) an INSAR profile and log in to register for the event, INSAR Member status is NOT required to register. Member and non-member rates are available, in addition to reduced rates for attendees based in low-income countries.

For more information, visit: https://www.autism-insar.org/page/2021AnnMtg

DON’T MISS THE STUDENT AND TRAINEE PRECONFERENCE WORKSHOP: MONDAY MAY 3RD 2021, 12:00PM - 3:00PM ET

This year’s panelists include:
Eva Loth, Ph.D., King’s College London
Steven Kapp, Ph.D., University of Portsmouth
Brian Boyd, Ph.D., University of Kansas
Paul Wang, M.D., Simons Foundation Autism Research Initiative (SFARI)
Gahan Pandina, Ph.D., Janssen Research & Development

The topic for this year’s student and trainee preconference workshop is “Increasing Access & Representation”.

Following the panel presentations, attendees will have the opportunity to join smaller informal group discussions with expert faculty facilitators.

This year’s small group discussion leaders include:
Susan Faja, Ph.D., Boston Children’s Hospital & Harvard Medical School
Sophy Kim, Ph.D., Weill Cornell Medicine
Saroasha Pillay, MSc, Occupational Therapy, University of Cape Town
Natasha Marrus, M.D., Ph.D., Washington University School of Medicine
Andres Roman-Urlrestaru, Ph.D., University of Cambridge
Jennifer Foss-Feig, Ph.D., Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
Meghan Miller, Ph.D., University of California Davis

Registration for this event is essential, so remember to register for this ‘in-conjunction’ event when you sign up for the INSAR 2021 Annual Meeting Virtual Conference!

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- Letter from Professor Cheryl Dissanayake
Monday May 3rd 4:00pm – 5:30pm ET

Each year, the INSAR Annual Meeting presents an opportunity for the international autism research community to connect, exchange and form ideas, and help contribute to the advancement of autism science. Students and trainees attend INSAR to learn about cutting-edge autism science and to network with peers and senior scientists. Existing Student and Trainee Committee (STC) events at the INSAR Annual Meeting, such as the Meet-the-Experts Luncheon, provide an opportunity for conference networking. However, they do not provide instruction on the requisite skills for doing so effectively. This can be challenging for students and trainees because networking skills can be nuanced, confusing, and often intimidating to master. This is especially relevant in light of the growing number of meetings and conferences that have moved to virtual platforms—a new arena where even skilled networkers may struggle.

In order to meet this need, for the first time at this year’s INSAR meeting, the STC are offering a new event that aims to teach skills for effective networking at in-person and virtual conferences: the Networkshop. This novel event will begin with an interactive session with a best-selling author and internationally recognized expert on networking, mentoring, and coaching: Isaac Serwanga. This introduction will focus on theoretical and practical advice about successful networking in academic environments, such as initiating and maintaining contacts, following up with new connections, and telling your story.

Trainees will then have a unique opportunity to ask about networking strategies directly to a panel of experts in autism research. The STC is inviting a group of leading autism scientists to share their networking experiences in a moderated discussion in response to questions from the audience.

The Networkshop will take place on Zoom and will be streamed live to INSAR student and trainee members.

Register for this free event when you register for the INSAR 2021 Annual Meeting Virtual Conference! To register, visit: https://www.autism-insar.org/page/2021AnnMtg

As with other events associated with the 2021 INSAR Virtual Annual Meeting, registration is available during general registration to the online conference.
The INSAR Institute is a six-week webinar series on topics within autism research. It is open to everyone and is a great opportunity for students and trainees to access research from leaders in the field. The theme for the INSAR Institute 2021 is “Autism & Intersectionality.” The 2021 INSAR Institute series will consider autism research and autistic experiences from an intersectional perspective, to further reflect upon recent efforts to reach researchers from different cultures, different identities, and around the globe through INSAR’s statements regarding diversity and inclusion as well as initiatives (Global Senior Leaders; Early Career Global Representatives; Cultural Diversity Committee; Gender, Sexuality, and Romantic Relationships SIG; Autistic Researchers Committee). Broadening our understanding of autism as intersecting with identities and groups has implications for science, clinical practice, and policy to ensure that all autistic people reach their full potential.

Registration for the INSAR Institute will open after the Annual Meeting via the INSAR website. Look out for an email from INSAR!
Need a break?

Play our INSAR themed word search!

Can you spot all of the words related to this year's INSAR events? Bring a snapshot of your completed crossword puzzle to one of our Socials to be entered into a raffle to win a prize!

INSAR Event Word Search

REPRESENTATION
EHXOMSEENIARTB
FUZASDIVERSITYH
VLGATCODEGXSQN
IAOINSARWDUGOTV
INTERSECTIONAL
TCSADAYESSHMVQ
QUOLOUOMEETINGNL
ASILTGRSIGBCQTK
LUCASWTPSSHXEPAROPOHSKROWTENKJ
AINTUITEHMJCL
YDPRECONFERENCE
QMVINSTREPXESH
KCURMPEIKNHGM

INSAR
MEETING
INTERSECTIONAL
NETWORKSHOP
EXPERTS
students
institute
SIGS
representation
DIVERSITY
VIRTUAL
TRAINNEES
SOCIAL
PRECONFERENCE
A LETTER FROM INSAR VICE PRESIDENT AND OUR BOARD LIAISON

PROFESSOR CHERYL DISSANAYAKE

It is with pleasure that I accepted the invitation to contribute to the Student and Trainee Newsletter in the 20th year of our society. As INSAR vice-President, I am Board liaison for the Student and Trainee Committee (along with the Early Careers Committee and Autism Researchers Committee). In this role, I have had the opportunity to work with our next generation of researchers who are from increasingly diverse backgrounds, including being neuro-diverse. Their energy, enthusiasm and commitment bodes well for the future of autism research.

I have long been a member of INSAR. However, as the society was formed following my student/traineeship, I did not have the advantage as a junior scholar of all that is offered by INSAR. I learnt about INSAR in its first year from two of its prestigious founding members and from whom I have learnt a lot – Professor Marion Sigman, who had been my postdoctoral mentor (1993-1995), and Professor Helen Tager-Flusberg, who I met in person for the first time at a meeting in Sydney, Australia in 2001. Unfortunately, I was unable to travel to that first meeting (IMFAR as it was called) in San Diego given its distance from Australia and having two very young children. Hence the first IMFAR I attended was in 2004 in Sacramento, when Arnie Schwarzenegger was Governor of California. He was even seen at a poster session! I have been attending the annual meeting since, only missing a few in the years in between. Through these years, acquaintances have become collaborators, and collaborators have become friends – and I have sorely missed seeing them in person given Covid-19!

It was my association and experience with INSAR that inspired my colleagues and I to cofound the Australasian Society for Autism Research (ASfAR) in 2011. Having seen first-hand how INSAR was advancing knowledge about autism - by disseminating the research of its membership which included established and early career researchers as well as students and trainees - we saw the need to create an Australasian equivalent to do the same. At INSAR, I saw how one could quickly sense and contribute to the research shifts overtime as knowledge increased and earlier held assumptions were dismissed. And much more recently, how autistic people themselves have been guiding our research by telling us what is needed to improve their lives.

Over the years, INSAR has become a global society. For a long time it was a largely North American Society, understandable given its North American origins. While the majority of the membership is still largely from this region, the increasing years has seen an expansion of both its international membership and ensuing global reach, particularly with the introduction of the INSAR Regional Meetings. We now have a Senior Global Leaders Committee, on which I am privileged to serve (representing the Western Pacific Region). Country leads have recently been appointed who will help us navigate and address global research. With the majority of the worlds autistic people living outside of western industrial nations, and indeed most in low and middle income countries, this change will be an impactful one.

I was honoured to be recognized as an INSAR Fellow in its inaugural round in 2018, and was voted Vice-President in 2019. I also now Chair the Fellow’s Committee. I enjoy each of these roles, and value being able to contribute to INSAR governance as a member of its Board. The Board’s commitment to issues of diversity and representation, and extending our global reach to promote the highest quality autism research, particularly amongst student and early career researchers, will ensure knowledge generation and translation and service advances into the future.

Over the years, the most profound change for me as an autism researcher and a member of INSAR has been the steady increase in the number of autistic researchers contributing to autism science. This change is reflected in the establishment of the Autistic Researchers Committee in 2020. We stand to learn much from them.

Cheryl Dissanayake, Ph.D.

Newsletter working group: Lauren Singer, Alicia Montgomery, Hillary Schiltz, Rebecca Poulsen, and Desi Jones