

# Editorial

## Eddie Chaplin, Jane McCarthy, Samuel Tromans and Verity Chester

**F**or the first editorial of 2022, the outgoing editors of *Advances in Autism*, Dr Jane McCarthy and Prof Eddie Chaplin will reflect on their development of the journal, the highlights during their tenure, followed by an introduction of the incoming editors, Ms Verity Chester and Dr Sam Tromans, and a description of the current issue.

### Reflections from the outgoing editors

In 2013 having both edited the excellent *Journal of Advances in Mental Health in Intellectual Disabilities* on separate occasions, we both met together in 2013 to pitch to Emerald Publishers, the need for a new journal covering autism that would be relevant to academics, practitioners, carers and the autistic community. By mid-2015 the first edition was published. The very first paper from Ledingham and Mills reported on what is still an under researched area of cybercrime and autism, which had attracted a great deal of national and international attention due to several high profile cases. Before this, information in the public domain was largely from media accounts of real-life cases that were largely sensationalised and did not put autism in a good light. From the outset, the journal attracted international attention and this was and still today is reflected in the Editorial Board.

In the second volume, it was our honour for the journal to have a paper submitted from Dr Richard Mills, on behalf of himself and Dr Lorna Wing and included the following tribute from Dr Mills:

With the death of Dr Lorna Wing the world of autism lost an unrivalled champion, friend and influence. It is impossible to do justice to her immense contribution in a few words. An original thinker and prolific researcher, she was of one of the founders of the National Autistic Society and Research Autism, author of countless books, articles and scientific papers, the first to speak of autism in the broader context of a spectrum and not a single condition; who introduced the term Asperger syndrome and who with her colleague Dr Judith Gould opened the diagnostic centre in Bromley Kent, which now bears her name. She inspired generations of parents, professionals and researchers across the world but remained modest as to her achievements, incurably inquisitive and always approachable, especially by parents of autistic children.

Volume 2 also saw the start of the Special Editions, the first being “Tuberous sclerosis complex: a rare genetic condition associated with autism spectrum disorder” (Guest Editors: Lisa Underwood and Charlotte Tye), followed by “Autism and offending behaviour” (Guest Editors: Regi Alexander and Peter E. Langdon), Since then there have been special editions each year including Improving access to health care (Guest Editors: Tanja Sappok, Whitney Brooks and Susan Havercamp). Two guest topics – “Inclusive educational practice for autistic learners” (Guest Editors: Damian Elgin Maclean Milton and Nicola Martin) and “Women, girls, and autism spectrum disorders” (Guest Editor: Verity Chester) – both producing double issues with the latter being the forerunner to the journal’s commitment to regular special editions themed around equality, diversity and inclusion, with Ms Chester leading this initiative off the back of her successful special editions. The most recent special edition we commissioned was “Employment” (Guest Editors: Hilary Fertig, Nicola Martin and Mitzi Waltz).

Eddie Chaplin is based at the Advanced and Integrated Practice, London South Bank University, London, UK. Jane McCarthy is based at the Mental Health & Intellectual Disabilities Research & Policy Unit, London South Bank University School of Health and Social Care, London, UK, and King’s College London, London, UK. Samuel Tromans is based at the Department of Psychiatry, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, Leicester, UK and Social and Epidemiology Psychiatry Group, Department of Health Sciences, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK. Verity Chester is based at the Department of Psychiatry, Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Trust, Norwich, UK.

The journal has offered a platform for competing views, philosophies and has encouraged debate amongst the autistic community. We are also proud to see that the journal has been a vehicle for autistic researchers and persons not only to publish, but also as Guest Editors and reviewers of manuscripts.

The role of Editor is an arduous one, so it is after seven years that the time is now right to hand over the baton. As our last act as Editors, we would like to welcome both Ms Verity Chester and Associate Professor Sam Tromans and wish them all the very best in succeeding us as the new Editors. Both have outstanding track records in autism research and other neurodevelopmental conditions and showed their expertise previously via the Special Editions they have worked together on. It is our pleasure to accept the invitation to continue to serve on the Editorial Board as Expert Editorial Advisors.

So for the last time we would like to extend an invitation to subscribers and readers to submit articles to *Advances in Autism* for future editions at: <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/aia>. The journal as it did at the start aims to change the way that professionals work with people with autism spectrum conditions, challenging traditional assumptions and ways of working. We would like to thank past and new readers, subscribers and contributors to *Advances in Autism*, and look forward to an exciting new era for the journal under its new Editorship control.

## **Eddie Chaplin and Jane McCarthy**

### ***Welcome from the new editors***

Welcome to the first edition of *Advances in Autism* of 2022, where we would first like to introduce ourselves as the incoming editors.

Verity Chester is a Research Associate and RADiANT (ReseArch in DevelopmentAl NeuropsychiaTry) Network Manager at Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Trust. She is also a PhD student at the University of East Anglia, where her project is on social information processing and offending behaviour among autistic adults, for which she is supervised by Professor Peter Langdon and Doctor Karen Bunning. Verity has published over 65 peer-reviewed research papers and led on the development of a Royal College of Psychiatrists College Report, entitled “Restrictive Interventions in In-Patient Intellectual Disability Services”.

Sam Tromans is an Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Leicester, and an Honorary Consultant in the Psychiatry of Intellectual Disability at Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust. He completed his PhD at the University of Leicester, which was on autism prevalence in acute psychiatric inpatient settings, for which he was supervised by Professor Traolach Brugha and Professor Guiqing (Lily) Yao, and supported by Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust and the National Institute for Health and Care Research.

Additionally, we would like to give thanks to both Professor Eddie Chaplin and Associate Professor Jane McCarthy for their excellent terms of editorship and unwavering commitment to *Advances in Autism* over the past decade, where they have taken the journal to new heights and leave a lasting legacy of autism research. They have also been immensely helpful in providing advice and support to ourselves as incoming editors, and we are grateful that they will be remaining on the Editorial Board. We wish both Eddie and Jane all the very best for the future.

We would also like to say goodbye to Professor Barry Carpenter, who has recently left the *Advances in Autism* Editorial Board following his retirement. We thank him for his significant contribution to the journal, and wish him every happiness in his retirement.

Furthermore, we would like to welcome Dr Suzi Sapiets to the Editorial Board. Suzi is a Postdoctoral Research Associate based at the Tizard Centre, University of Kent. She has extensive experience in research pertaining to autism and developmental disabilities. Suzi's PhD project, conducted at the University of Warwick, was on the subject of access to early years support for children with developmental disabilities and their families. We would like to

give a warm welcome to Suzi, and are grateful for her offering her expertise as an Editorial Board Member.

### ***The current issue***

Onto the contents of the present issue. The first paper, by Fontes and Pino-Juste, is a scoping review on portrayals of autism and social awareness in published and broadcast media, where previous literature on this important topic is discussed and critically appraised. The authors recognise the diversity of autistic persons, and that singular representations of autism cannot possibly be representative of the autistic community.

The second paper, by Karmakar *et al.*, investigates autistic traits in the Indian general adult population, using an adapted version of the Autism Quotient, translated into Bengali. Despite the Autism Quotient being widely used, their study represents the first reporting the psychometric properties of the measure in this population.

The third paper, by Mesa and Hamilton, explores identity development in autistic young people, through a series of semi-structured interviews with them, alongside their parents and teachers. The qualitative, multi-informant design helps provide a comprehensive overview of life for autistic young persons, including how conceptions of what it means to be autistic change over time, as well as the role and impact of camouflaging in this group.

The fourth paper, by Adamou *et al.*, investigates the usefulness of the Adult Asperger Assessment (AAA) in an adult clinical population. The AAA consists of the Autism Quotient, the Empathy Quotient and the Relatives Questionnaire. The authors found that whilst scores on the Relatives Questionnaire accurately predicted diagnostic outcome, no such accuracy was found for the other two measures. These findings demonstrate the importance of subjecting any autism screening measures to research scrutiny for the population(s) in which they are intended for use.

The fifth paper, by Safi *et al.*, reports the use of digital social stories to modify social behaviours in autistic children. This approach demonstrated promise in the two autistic children reported in the paper, and represents an example of combining existing widely used social stories practices with digital technologies.

The sixth paper, by Koceski and Trajkovski, compares the rates of co-occurring conditions between autistic and non-autistic young people based in Macedonia using a standardised questionnaire. They found that many conditions were significantly more frequently reported for the autistic cohort, including oral ulcers, dental caries, epilepsy, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, constipation and sleep problems. Such findings support the need for health services to be particularly focussed on the health needs of autistic persons, where timely identification of co-occurring conditions can be invaluable.

The final paper, by Araghi *et al.*, investigates the psychometric properties of a Persian-translated version of the Social Responsiveness Scale (second edition), involving a study population of autistic children. It is of course essential to subject translated versions of established measures to validation studies, rather than working on the assumption that the translated measure has equivalent validity to the original. The author's findings appear to suggest that their translated version may have clinical utility in the evaluation of Iranian children.

We do hope you find the first issue of 2022 informative and useful.

**Verity Chester and Samuel Tromans**