

Eddie Chaplin, Jane McCarthy and Steven Hardy

This edition includes five papers looking at how we understand the different aspects of development for autistic children including motor, communication, visual and social alongside a paper on how to screen for autism spectrum conditions with the support of preschool teachers. The first paper from Redquest and colleagues aims to explore the social and motor impairments of children with autism through the perspectives of eight caregivers of children with autism. The key message to emerge was the need to educate parents about the consequences of motor impairments or delays and their association with the development of social skills.

The second paper from Lai investigates the social and affective aspects of communication in school-age children with high functioning autism (HFA) and children with Williams syndrome (WS) alongside neurotypical children. Currently, little is known about how school-age children use and integrate verbal and non-verbal behaviours in the context of social interaction. This study used a microanalytic coding scheme during interviews with the child as the speaker and listener. The children were examined both in facial emotion recognition tasks and in cognitive flexibility tasks using the dimensional change card-sorting task. For facial expression, the WS and neurotypically developing groups produced more facial expressions than the HFA group and although there is a need for more research, this paper offers a further interesting insight into the use of communication by the HFA group.

The third paper from Carozza and Fabio examines if reduced attention towards social stimuli is determined by initial underlying difficulties in the control of visual attention. It used an eye-tracker paradigm for assessing visual exploration and recognition memory towards geometric figures in 17 children with ASD matched with 17 children with typical development (TD). The results showed that the ASD group seemed indifferent to both the geometric complexity and the typology of figures, whereas the TD group showed higher performances with highly complex and curved geometric figures than with low complex and rectilinear geometric figures. This is an interesting finding that needs further research but with potential utility in early intervention for children with ASD.

The fourth paper from Nah described the development and presented preliminary data on a checklist for screening design to be used by preschool teachers (CAPT-S) in Singapore to identify autism spectrum disorders in mainstream preschoolers from age 3 to 6 years old. This study adopted a cross-sectional questionnaire design, with 63 preschool teachers from mainstream preschool centres who rated their students on a four-point Likert scale on frequency of observed behaviour. Early results indicated that construct validity was demonstrated and high reliability in terms of internal consistency and moderate test-retest reliability of the CAPT-S. Diagnostic validity of the CAPT-S was also established, even after controlling for variables such as working experience and time spent working with that student. The optimal cut-off score of 24 produced high sensitivity and specificity. This study is an important contribution and demonstrates the utility of using preschool teachers as an additional informant in the screening process for children with ASD.

The final paper from Alkhayat and Ibrahim explored how video games can be used to aid the cognitive and social development among children with ASD and typically developing children (TDC). In total, 112 children participated with the researchers attempting to understand the relationship between exposure to video games and children's social

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interactions. It was seen that when families played games with children, the children tended to calm down suggesting that family playing games with children can be helpful for both children with ASD and for TDC.

For next year volume 7, we have lined up special editions on diversity and employment. We wish everyone a good end to this year and a happy new year and to stay safe given the current effect of Covid-19. There is an online free publication produced by Peter Cronin and friends *Peter & friends talk about COVID-19 and having a learning disability and/or autism* (Cronin et al., 2020) available from the end of October about the experiences of people with intellectual disability and autism during the current pandemic; details and download links to the publication will be available at:

<https://www.stevehardyldn.com/> @SteveHardyLDN

[https://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/@FPLD\\_Tweets](https://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/@FPLD_Tweets)

This book is self-published and was the idea of a gentleman with intellectual disability Peter Cronin who asked his friends in health and education services to help him make it a reality. The book contains accounts from people and from around the world and tells how they have coped and shown resilience throughout the pandemic.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the journal and wish to thank you for your continuing support of *Advances in Autism*. We invite contributions from our readers to the journal and welcome a variety of papers including innovative and evidence-based practice, research, case studies, service and policy-related issues and literature reviews and will very much appreciate papers describing the impact of the global pandemic on the lives and well-being of autistic people and their families and carers. We welcome submissions from the range of health and social care professionals, but additionally those who use services and people who care for them. If you would like to know more about how to submit your work for publication, please contact us at [chapline@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:chapline@lsbu.ac.uk).

## Reference

Cronin, P., Hardy, S., Roberts, M., Burke, C., Mahon, D. and Chaplin, E. (2020), *Peter & Friends Talk About COVID-19 and having a Learning Disability and/or Autism*, Penge Publishers, London.

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