ABOUT THE PRESENTERS & MODERATOR

Albee Messing, VMD, PhD, is a professor of neuropathology in the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Waisman Center investigator. He was appointed interim director of the Waisman Center in August 2014. He earned a bachelor’s degree in biology from Yale and a VMD and PhD in experimental pathology from the University of Pennsylvania. Messing joined the UW faculty in 1985 and focuses his research on Alexander disease, a progressive and usually fatal neurological disorder in which abnormal deposits of protein—known as Rosenthal fibers—occur in astrocytes of the brain and spinal cord. Messing and his colleagues discovered the genetic basis for this disease in 2001 and his laboratory now maintains a broad program spanning molecular biology through therapeutic research that aims to develop treatments for individuals affected by Alexander disease.

Susan Ellis Weismer, PhD, CCC-SLP, is a professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, associate dean for research, College of Letters and Science, and a Waisman Center investigator. She received her PhD in language development and disorders at Indiana University. Her research focuses on the developmental course and nature of language processing in atypical language learners compared to those with typical language development. Populations of interest include late talkers, children with specific language impairment (SLI), and young children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

Leann E. Smith, PhD, is an assistant clinical professor of pediatrics and a Waisman Center investigator. Her research focuses on the impact of ASD on the family system as well as the role of the family environment in supporting development for individuals with ASD across the lifespan. Smith received a grant from Autism Speaks and the U.S. Department of Education to investigate the Transitioning Together program, an intervention for adolescents with ASD and their families.

Brittany Travers, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Occupational Therapy Program in the Department of Kinesiology and a Waisman Center investigator. Her research focuses on motor skills in autism and other developmental disorders.

WAISMAN CENTER CLINICIAN PANEL

Maria Stanley, MD, Medical Director, Waisman Center Clinics
Sarah Labaz, MA, CF-SLP, Speech-Language Pathologist
Abygail Marx, MS, CCC-SLP, Speech-Language Pathologist
Lindsay McCary, PhD, Psychologist
Molly Murphy, PhD, Treatment Services
Paola Perez, MSSW, Social Worker
Kelli Rhinerson, MS, CCC-SLP, Speech-Language Pathologist

Waisman Center Clinics
University of Wisconsin-Madison
1500 Highland Avenue, Madison WI 53705
608.263.3301 | waisman.wisc.edu/clinics.htm

Saturday, January 24, 2015
9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Friends of the Waisman Center Auditorium
Waisman Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Learn about advances in autism research and services and hear from a panel of experts—individuals with autism and family members.

Hosted by:
Waisman Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin

Sponsored by:
Friends of the Waisman Center
SCHEDULE

9:00 - 9:30 a.m.
Welcome and Introduction to the Waisman Center
Albee Messing, VMD, PhD, Professor, Neuropathology and Interim Director, Waisman Center

9:30 - 10:00 a.m.
Parental Verbal Responsiveness Can Facilitate Language and Communication in Young Children on the Autism Spectrum
Susan Ellis Weismer, PhD, Professor, Communication Sciences and Disorders and Waisman Center Investigator
This presentation will focus on connections between parent verbal responsiveness and language development in young children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Research shows that different types of linguistic input are needed to facilitate language learning depending on the child's developmental level. Results from two studies demonstrate the effectiveness of parent-implemented programs in aiding language development and communication.

10:00 - 10:30 a.m.
Motor Ability in Autism
Brittany Travers, PhD, Assistant Professor, Kinesiology and Waisman Center Investigator
Motor difficulties are not considered a central feature of autism, yet a number of individuals with autism struggle with balance, completing a motor sequence, or reacting quickly. These motor difficulties have been found to relate to more severe autism symptoms and impaired activities of daily living. Therefore, motor difficulties may be intricately intertwined with social communication and independent living skills in this population. This presentation will discuss common motor difficulties in autism, how motor skills relate to neurobiology in autism, and how motor skills develop and change over the life span.

10:45 - 11:15 a.m.
Quality of Life of Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder
Leann Smith, PhD, Assistant Clinical Professor of Pediatrics and Waisman Center Investigator
Given that more children with ASD than ever before are now entering adulthood, there is growing interest in understanding outcomes for individuals later in the life course. In addition to studying objective measures of adult life such as employment and independent living, it is important to understand the subjective experience of well-being for individuals with ASD from the perspective of adults themselves. This presentation shares findings from a recent study on quality of life for adults with ASD mid-life and implications for future research and practice.

11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. LUNCH Optional panel discussion with clinicians

12:15 - 1:00 p.m. Panel Discussion
A panel of experts that includes individuals with ASD and family members.
Moderated by Leann Smith, PhD

ABOUT THE PANELISTS

If you have questions for the panel, please write them on the enclosed insert. Waisman Center staff will collect these forms at 10:30 a.m. This will make it possible for the panelists to select initial questions to answer and have time to prepare responses.

• Mary Fruits is the mother of three young boys. Her eldest son is seven years old and just before his third birthday, was diagnosed with high-functioning autism. Mary, a sign language interpreter, wanted to learn as much as possible about autism and went back to school for a master's degree in applied behavioral analysis with an autism certificate. In March she will present about autism in the deaf community to fellow ASL interpreters and is planning the first Madison Autism Football Camp for October 2015.

• Evan Halpop has high-functioning autism. He is a student at Madison College pursuing an associate's degree in photography with a certificate in journalism. He values hard work and believes people with autism are capable of working in professional fields. He is ambitious, goal-oriented, and is working toward what he wants most in his life — to be a photojournalist. He enjoys playing hockey on the Wisconsin Timber Wolves Special Hockey team.

• Thomas Heibel is a proud father of three boys ages 17, 18 and 27. His two youngest sons have an ASD diagnosis and his oldest son is diagnosed as bipolar. Tom and his wife Julie are active members of the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin and Julie serves on the board. Tom works as a quality improvement specialist at CUNA Mutual Group in Madison. He resides with his family in Waunakee.

• Susan Henwood Hamilton is the grandmother of Gavin, who was diagnosed with high-functioning ASD at age two. His diagnosis inspired her to learn more about autism and find ways to help the ASD community. She is the board vice president of the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin. Gavin received four years of behavioral, occupational, and physical therapy. Now six years old and in first grade, he is functioning very well both academically and socially.

• Al Kutti was diagnosed at age 34 with ASD. He is an Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin board member and volunteers for Ausome Adults, North/Eastside Senior Coalition (NESCO), and Dane County Timebank. When he isn't busy he writes two blogs — Adventures in Travel, and A Day in the Life of Asperger's.

• Tiffany Leach is from the Bad River Reservation in northern Wisconsin. She is married and a mother of six children that range in age from 4 to 23 years old. Her 12-year-old son was diagnosed with ASD when he was five. Her youngest daughter, age four, was recently diagnosed with ASD. Tiffany works as an Indian child welfare case worker and a domestic violence advocate for the Lac Court Oreilles tribe. She specializes in families with children with special needs and focuses on helping parents with early intervention and self-advocacy.

• Leigh and Sara Pierce have been married for nine years and have two sons, ages 8 and 16, who are on the autism spectrum. They have been an active part of the autism community for five years and serve as parent mentors for families in Rock County.