

Report by:

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Attending IMFAR was a beneficial activity with regards to gaining knowledge around a variety of issues pertaining to ASD, specifically around co-morbid problems, treatment options, and different ways of using research tools with children on the spectrum. I found many of the presentations, both oral and poster, covered a range of topics. Since the conference I have shared a variety of posters from the conference with colleagues who had not attended IMFAR but would have benefited from reading the material from poster sessions. IMFAR also provided me with ideas and methods that I will be incorporating into my current and future research projects, and allowed me to have discussions in person with researchers in a similar niche of ASD research.

I was able to meet professionals conducting research in the area of cognitive behaviour therapy for anxiety with youth who have ASD. I was able to connect with Rebecca McNally Keehn from the California School of Professional Psychology at Alliant International University whom is conducting similar research surrounding the use of the “Coping Cat” cognitive behaviour therapy program for anxiety in a population of youth with ASD. She was also a presenter at the conference and I was able to see some preliminary data on her program outcomes in her presentation entitled “Effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral therapy for children with autism spectrum disorder and anxiety”. Judith Reaven also presented data on a randomized control trial of cognitive behavior therapy for youth with ASD. Both presentations provided me with

additional background on this type of therapy in the ASD population and also helped me in the choice of the measures I will be utilizing for my thesis data collection.

My supervisor (Dr. Jonathan Weiss), Rebecca McNally Keehn, and I met to discuss our projects, specifically around what worked and didn’t in implementing the “Coping Cat” program, which was not designed specifically for the ASD population. It was wonderful to have a chance to meet and share information regarding our programs’ progress, our research methods and goals. We have formed a collaborative relationship and have since followed up with each other through email and have shared measures and methods for data collection.

The poster sessions were also an opportunity to learn new ways of looking at previously collected data. I read a poster by Megan Ransone, Matthew Lerner, and Amori Mikami from the University of Virginia, entitled “Parental self-efficacy and child depressive symptoms predict inflated social self-perceptions among adolescents with ASDs”. This was of particular interest to me as it utilized measures similar to those my colleagues and I in our evaluation of social skills group, and also demonstrated that parent-child discrepancies are evident in the reporting of social skill deficiencies in this population. Their poster analyzed the parent-child discrepancy in a novel way, and in discussions with my supervisors at CAMH and York University we have considered the option of also utilizing this method to analyze data we have previously collected.