

Report by:

Sonia Mastrangelo
Student Researcher

PhD - Education
York University

I defended my doctoral dissertation at York University two weeks after attending IMFAR. My research was centered on outcomes for families of children with autism spectrum disorder involved in early intervention. I had attended IMFAR several years earlier in Montreal but, thanks to Autism Ontario, this time I had the opportunity to present my dissertation findings just weeks before my defense date. The conference allowed me to rekindle research relationships with colleagues in both Canada and the U.S. while meeting new researchers and scholars from abroad.

My second language is Italian, and I was thrilled to engage in a discussion with researchers from Sardegna, Italy about their work with families. Dr. Laura Vismara and Dr. Giuseppe Doneddu enlightened me with their research on Lausanne's Trialogue Play, an approach that gives voice to the parental state of mind while raising the positive experiences of couples raising a child on the spectrum through communication and processing. In addition, their promising research has

supported families through critical events such as school entry, birth of another sibling and transitions.

It was a real privilege to liaise with post doctoral fellows at the M.I.N.D institute who are also interested in measuring outcomes for families involved in early intervention. I was surprised to discover that on the whole, U.S. states are not required to report on family outcomes to respective government funding agencies, although there has been a recent movement to begin objective measurement in this area using various scales.

IMFAR was an enriching experience both professionally and personally. The quality of research, informative speakers and valuable handouts have broadened my understanding of autism spectrum disorders and have also given me in depth information on specific topics in the field that have always been of particular interest (i.e. neurological basis of ASD). Thank you Autism Ontario!