

Report by:

**Sandy Shultz**

Student Researcher

Western University

I would like to thank Autism Ontario for contributing to my attendance at the 2007 IMFAR conference held in Seattle, WA. By attending, I was able to present a poster displaying my research, speak to many experts in the autism field, and expose myself to a great deal of interesting research.

The task of presenting a poster was exciting and very beneficial in my development as a scientist. My poster focused on my findings of social and sensorimotor deficits, consistent to those of human autism, induced by propionic acid in the rat. Through the presentation process I was able to share my research with many people, hopefully educated them and stimulated ideas as to how propionic acid might be involved in autism.

Additionally, it allowed me an opportunity to refine my skills in communicating my findings, a very important skill in the research field. It also allowed me to speak to many experts in autism.

Through these interactions many ideas were shared and I was intrigued to discover how much other research my findings might be implicated in.

Because of this, I left the conference many ideas for future studies.

In addition to these benefits, attending the conference allowed me to further educate myself in other research areas I was unfamiliar with. More specifically, a great deal of my knowledge concerns the environmental factors contributing to autism and attendance allowed me to broaden this knowledge base to areas of genetic research.

Overall the conference was highly enjoyable and further convinced me that this is the area of study I want to be involved with. Therefore, in the remaining time I have to complete my degree I would like to continue examining the potential role of propionic acid in ASDs. More specifically, I would like to further study the extent that propionic acid inhibits social and sensorimotor skills in the rat. Hopefully findings from this animal model can lead to insight on potential preventative and/or treatment strategies that might alleviate autistic symptoms in humans. To conclude, I would like to thank Autism Ontario. It was very helpful to myself and I hope I was able to enlighten others.