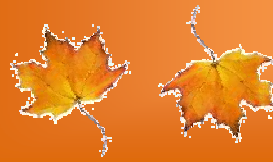




# WAADF Member Newsletter

[www.waadf.org.au](http://www.waadf.org.au)

Autumn 2009



## From the Editor...

Hi Members, welcome to the new look WAADF newsletter, being relaunched in 2009. We will aim to use this newsletter as a way of updating members on WAADF news, professional development opportunities and relevant research in between our quarterly member's forums.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Sabrina de Beer for her work editing the newsletter over the past several years. Sabrina has stepped down as editor and from the WAADF board, but will remain with us as an active autism assessor in the south-west region and as a WAADF member.

We welcome feedback on the newsletter. If you have any comments or suggestions on future topics, or if you wish to contribute an article please contact me via e-mail.

Cheers

*Teresa Davidson* Speech Pathologist

## 2009 Member Meetings

All current and prospective members are invited to WAADF quarterly meetings:

4 June

3 September (AGM)

3 December

Thursdays, 9 – 11am  
State Child Development Centre  
16 Rheola St, West Perth

Please invite your colleagues.  
Membership forms and payments may be submitted at meetings.

All memberships will be due for renewal at the September AGM.

## From the Chair... Hello everyone and welcome to our new look newsletter!

On behalf of the WAADF members and board I would once again like to thank Sabrina de Beer for the fantastic job she did as our previous newsletter editor. We are fortunate to welcome Teresa Davidson who has taken on the editor role and developed our new look and style for the newsletter. Please feel free to send interesting articles, resources, news snippets or anything else you think would be of interest to other members. Teresa's e-mail, along with those of other board members are on Page 3 of this newsletter.

Our Member's Forum in March was very well attended and provided members with opportunities for networking and catching up with colleagues. Following a general expression of interest our upcoming June forum will include an inaugural 'Open Floor Discussion' on the controversial topic of Foetal Testosterone and Autism. See Page 2 of this newsletter for further information on the subject in preparation for the June meeting. If this format proves successful we will canvas members for future discussion topics. So come along in June and join in a spirited collegial discussion!

As always, this newsletter aims to be a voice for WAADF membership to please feel free to provide your feedback, comments and contributions.

Best wishes *Sarah MacDermott* WAADF Chairperson 2008-09

## Autism and Foetal Testosterone

There has been much attention recently on the link between testosterone and autism spectrum disorders. Many have suggested that Autism is merely an exaggeration of the 'male brain' with testosterone as the governing factor. This theory is being refined through current research being undertaken around the world. Professor Simon Baron-Cohen from the Cambridge University Autism Research Centre has been involved in studies investigating the links between exposure to foetal testosterone (FT) in amniotic fluid and the development of autistic traits later in life. One study has shown that high levels of FT are inversely associated with social development, language development and empathy and positively associated with traits such as a desire for repetition and close attention to detail.

Baron-Cohen expressed regret recently in his blog about the misrepresentation of his research in the media. In particular, he reiterated that the research was not born of a desire to find a pre-natal test for Autism, rather they were looking for neurobiological links to deepen our understanding of autism spectrum disorders. He also clarified that the associations were found between FT and *autistic traits*, NOT a clinical diagnosis of Autism or Aspergers Disorder.

Further information on this research, with links to the published papers can be found at:

[www.autismresearchcentre.com/research/hormones.asp](http://www.autismresearchcentre.com/research/hormones.asp)

A facilitated discussion on this topic will be a feature of the WAADF member's meeting on 4 June 2009.

## Conferences

Autism South Australia  
Adelaide 28 – 29 May 2009  
[www.autismsa.org.au](http://www.autismsa.org.au)

Asia Pacific Autism Conference  
Sydney 20 – 22 August 2009  
[www.apac09.org](http://www.apac09.org)

Autism & Related Disorders  
International Conference (UK)  
London 23 - 25 October 2009  
[www.autismconference2009.com](http://www.autismconference2009.com)

## Professional Development

Introduction to the ADOS  
Sydney, 27 – 28 May 2009  
Contact Gail Alvares  
[galvares@med.usyd.edu.au](mailto:galvares@med.usyd.edu.au)

Autism Spectrum Disorders:  
Understanding, Treating and  
Managing Autism  
Dr Jacqueline Roberts  
Perth, 5 – 6 November 2009 (TBC)  
[www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au](http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au)

## Certification Party Update

WAADF does not act as a regulatory body for autism assessment procedures in WA or an official registration body for assessors. However we are frequently approached by clinicians wishing to train as assessors or seeking information on how to complete their training process. Similarly, many clinicians who train others as assessors look for support and guidelines against which to measure the competency of their staff.

In 2008 a group of WAADF members formed a committee to work on a certification process for new and existing assessors. The goal was to develop a set of rubrics which assessors could use to monitor their competency and progress through the training process. They covered factors such as accurate identification of relevant information to rate the DSM criterion, appropriate application of standardised testing such as the ADOS, ADI-R and cognitive tests and report writing with quality justification of decision making.

The project is currently on somewhat of a hiatus, however if you would like to be involved in this working party please contact Teresa Davidson ([davidson.teresa@gmail.com](mailto:davidson.teresa@gmail.com))

2009 WAADF  
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## Upcoming Presentations

WAADF and the WA Autism Register will both be represented by posters at the Asia Pacific Autism Conference in Sydney in August this year. We are fortunate to have two WAADF members hosting these presentations.

Dr John Wray (Paediatrician) will be hosting the poster for the WA Autism Register while Wendy Marshall (Speech Pathologist) will be participating in the newly developed 'talking poster' format for a combined WAADF/Register poster.

If you are attending the APAC conference don't forget to stop by and say hello to John and Wendy.

## Case Presentations

As clinicians we are often involved in assessments where we need to consider many variables in making a differential diagnosis. By sharing these cases at WAADF forums we can all increase our knowledge and assessment skills.

If you have been involved in a complex or interesting assessment and would be willing to present this at a member's meeting we would like to hear from you.

Guidelines can be provided if requested to help shape your experience into a presentation.

Please contact Ritu Campbell on  
[ritucampbell@bigpond.com](mailto:ritucampbell@bigpond.com)

## DSM V update

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM) is currently under review with the new DSM-V due for publication in May 2012.

There are 10 members in the work group reviewing the section on neurodevelopmental disorders, the names and profiles of the members can be viewed at the above website and I'm sure many of you will recognise some familiar names from the autism literature. The group meet face-to-face periodically throughout the review process with the most recent meeting relevant to Autism held in September 2008.

Their report from this meeting, available online, highlights topics currently under 'active discussion' including potential revision to allow the co-morbidity of ADHD and Autism, the separation of CDD as a unique disorder and increasing the specificity of behaviours currently defined as "repetitive".

You can review progress on this process at [www.dsm5.org](http://www.dsm5.org)

## Websites Frequented by WAADF Members

The new Medicare items for Autism, both intervention and assessment, have provided financial assistance to many families and made private assessments more achievable for many clients. At WAADF we certainly don't suggest that we are experts on the system, however the following websites may be useful when navigating the Medicare world:

[www.medicare.gov.au](http://www.medicare.gov.au) – apply for provider numbers, check item numbers for services, clarify rebates  
[www.facs.gov.au](http://www.facs.gov.au) – Select the Subject Area 'People with a Disability'

Submit your 'Most Frequented' websites for possible inclusion in future newsletters to [davidson.teresa@gmail.com](mailto:davidson.teresa@gmail.com)