



Research Bulletin

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Community Advisory Group: You Are Invited

We're establishing a Community Advisory Group to enhance communication among researchers and the community at large.

This group will be a vital component of the Research Centre and will offer a forum for researchers and individuals to discuss priorities and issues related to research in developmental disabilities, including autism.

Please contact Toby Martin (info on reverse) if you are interested in participating in this valuable forum or would like to receive more information.

The **St. Amant Research Program** is dedicated to improving the quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities through research and education.

The program's current research is possible thanks to the support of

- University of Manitoba faculties of Nursing, Human Ecology, Arts, and Medicine.
- The Winnipeg Foundation
- St. Amant Foundation

Research Centre set to launch

We're proud to announce that the St. Amant Research Centre will be inaugurated in June 2006. This growth reflects both our current realities and our vision for the future. Despite this evolution, our mission remains unchanged: to improve the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities.

The St. Amant Research Centre will represent a dynamic intersection of research, knowledge transfer, teaching and service. Research and service are tightly linked, but the link depends on continual dialogue between scientists and service providers.

Focal point

A Research Centre provides a focal point through which researchers can be informed by the needs of service agencies, and where teachers and caregivers can connect with the latest evidence that will guide their practices. It's also a place where students and trainees can be equipped with skills and knowledge they'll need for careers in developmental disabilities.

We are uniquely positioned to play this role. Our success as a research program, our relationship with St. Amant, and most importantly the support of our past and present partners have all encouraged us to pursue the Research Centre vision.

Partnerships

Nine years ago, Dr. Helen Glass, Professor Emeritus of Nursing and then Chairperson of St. Amant's Board Research Committee, was instrumental in establishing the Research Program. Partnerships with St. Amant Foundation, The Winnipeg Foundation, and University of Manitoba have resulted in a core team of three researchers, with joint positions in the Faculties of Arts (Dept. of Psychology), Medicine, Nursing, and Human Ecology (Dept. of Family Social Sciences). Along with two full-time support staff, this team actively builds networks of research affiliates while conducting collaborative, interdisciplinary research. All of this activity has created the critical mass for a new Research Centre.

This year we take another step in the same progressive spirit as the St. Amant Research Centre. We look forward to sharing this experience with you.

Research Centre to focus on five key areas

People with developmental disabilities face special challenges in all areas of their lives, from education and work to health and daily living. We conduct research to build useful knowledge in all of these areas.

Choice and Quality of Life

Decision making is a key part of independence and quality of life. But how should we make choices available to people with severe disabilities? What are the best ways to help them express their true preferences? These are some of the key questions we are exploring.

Autism

Autism has increased in prevalence in recent years and so has the interest of our researchers in this challenging disability. Our projects in this area range from helping children communicate and take others' perspectives to evaluating the long-term effects of early intensive behavioural intervention. We're also col-

laborating with regional teams across Canada to study the genetics of autism in the hope of one day treating and preventing this condition more effectively.

Community Health

People with developmental disabilities experience more health related problems than the general population, and many of these conditions can be treated if they're identified early. Yet we don't really know how health care services are being used by persons with developmental disabilities living in the community. We're also studying the prevalence of autism spectrum disorders in Manitoba and across Canada.

Education of Health Care Professionals

The health care system is straining to meet the needs of the general population and is unprepared to properly care for increasing numbers of persons with developmental disabilities. Educational preparation of health and other re-

lated professionals is one of the issues being examined to learn how to better equip our health care system to care for the developmentally-disabled.

Families

Families of individuals with developmental disabilities often provide the most important and enduring relationships and support that individuals will experience across their life spans. We're developing research on ways to assess and meet the needs of these families as they face life transitions – their own and those of their family member with a disability.

Assessing Basic Learning Abilities

Identifying the basic building blocks of learning is a critical part of teaching – especially when the students face special challenges. We're learning how to identify, measure, and teach the component skills required for the many everyday tasks that may presently be too difficult for those with developmental disabilities.

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