

RESEARCH AUTISM

Improving the quality of life



Welcome to our Autumn newsletter. In this issue you can read about:

- *Our research projects on sleep and autism*
- *Why the Rt. Hon. John Bercow MP supports Research Autism*
- *The fantastic fundraising efforts of our supporters*

A focus on sleep

Parents and carers often tell us that one of the worst problems they face isn't their children's autism; it's the fact that their children - and therefore they - don't ever get a decent night's sleep.

Because of this we launched a series of research programmes aimed at improving sleep in individuals with autism.



'Sleepless nights are to be expected when you have a baby, but what I didn't expect was to be sleep deprived for 13 years! My daughter, who was diagnosed as on the autistic spectrum when she was 6, had sleep problems from the day she was born, as do many children with autism. Not only did she battle against going to bed or to sleep, but also she would wake up throughout the night and then have difficulty falling back to sleep. She had no respect for night or day, dark versus light!' Alison Blake

Sleep database. This project, undertaken by the University of Keele, was designed to produce a database of all of the relevant research on the subject of autism and sleep which can then be used as research resource by clinicians, researchers and parents alike. More at www.researchautism.net/sleepdatabase

Mends. This project, undertaken by the MENDS consortium, was designed to determine the effectiveness and safety of melatonin in improving total sleep time in children with neurodevelopmental disabilities including autism. As part of the study, the team created a booklet designed to help parents teach their children good sleep habits. More at www.researchautism.net/mends

Snuggledown. The aim of this project, being undertaken by a UK-wide team is to determine whether weighted blankets can help autistic children with persistent sleep problems sleep more readily. The study is currently looking for participants based in London and Oxford. More at www.researchautism.net/snuggledown

Out and About

We recently attended the Wales' 4th International Autism Conference in Cardiff and the Autism Show in London. Both conferences attracted people looking to find the latest information, advice, products and services to help them support individuals with autism.

We were also delighted to have been a partner in the recent conference Adolescence to Adulthood with Autism: Making the transition from education to employment held in London in September 2011. The conference brought together people with autism, parents, practitioners and policy makers to discuss this important issue. Topics of discussion included successful transition in practice, personal budgets, and supporting people into higher education and employment.

Rt Hon John Bercow MP, *Speaker of the House of Commons*



Research Autism is the only UK charity whose sole focus is to evaluate and conduct scientific research into autism interventions. Research has to be the starting point if we are better to understand this complex condition, and it is for this very reason I chose to support them as patron. The charity is committed to a programme of ground breaking research that is important to the autism community and that will improve quality of life and support social inclusion; something to which I believe every UK citizen has the right. One of the key starting points for Research Autism, and something that stands out for me, is its deep and well informed understanding of the needs of the autism community. By talking with, and listening to, people with autism, their families and carers, there is a real sense that the charity's research programme is driven by the priorities of those it aims to serve. This, coupled with its focus on delivering practical outcomes to improve the quality of life, and also ensuring that any outcomes from the research are widely disseminated and understood, means that it acts as a catalyst for change. I commend its work and look forward to seeing it grow over the coming months and years.

Drama education and individuals with autism

A recent study by Dr. Daisy Lloyd, endorsed by Research Autism, investigated whether drama could be used to overcome social difficulties in individuals with autism. The study found that drama education could help individuals with autism to develop perspective taking. It also illustrates both how this perspective taking develops over time and how it compares with perspective taking shown in other curricular areas.

More at www.researchautism.net/dramaeducation

Huge Thanks

to all of you who are raising money to support our work in so many and varied ways.

Blood, sweat and trainers

We are really grateful to Mark and Sharon Gilborson and Sheaian Lee who between them have raised £625 by running the Bristol Half in September.

Sheaian said: "There were times during training when my motivation started to crumble. But remembering that the money I would raise would help to improve the quality of life of people with autism really kept me going."

We'd also like to thank Gemma Cannon who raised over £500 by running the Marlow Half Marathon on 6 November. Before the race she said: "I am not too sure how (well maybe it was after a glass of wine or two) I was convinced into running my first Half Marathon (my very first and probably last!). I am very proud to be running for such an amazing cause."

You can still sponsor Gemma at <http://www.justgiving.com/Gemma-Cannon>



We are currently recruiting runners for the Edinburgh Marathon Weekend in May 2012, for which we are planning a family friendly weekend of activities. There are various runs including 5k, 10k and Team Relay to choose from. We are also delighted to have places for the Bath Half Marathon in March 2012, which is one of the longest established and most popular races in the UK. Please contact us if you are interested in taking part in either of these events, or other future fundraising challenges.

Kilimanjaro

Luke Jackson and Lizza Lane are planning to climb all 19,340 feet of Kilimanjaro in 2012 to raise money for Research Autism. Lizza says "We have decided to climb the tallest mountain in Africa. It's a bit crazy, but it's all for a cause that needs the attention it deserves! The money you donate will be put towards research into new interventions, which will result in a greater quality of life for anyone affected (directly or indirectly) by autism. Any donation, however small, including that pound from down the back of the sofa, or a couple of coins from your copper jar, is always greatly appreciated. Good things come to those who raise. Pretty please give generously!"

You can sponsor them at www.justgiving.com/lukeandlizzakili

Armchair fundraising: shopping on Amazon.co.uk

You don't have to exert yourself to raise money for Research Autism. We very much appreciate all those of you who support us by remembering to click on our fundraising link en route to a shopping spree at Amazon. 5% of the value of your shopping comes straight to us at no extra cost to you. The link is www.researchautism.net/amazon

Helen Finch, Fundraising Executive

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Making a difference



A very effective way that you can help us to continue our vital work is by making a one off donation. We will make sure that your donation is spent wisely and where it is most needed.

Deepa Korea, Chief Executive

If everybody who read this newsletter gave just £10 we could do amazing things.

£5: we could add a research paper to our publications database

£10: we could purchase a research paper so we can evaluate an autism treatment

£25: we could provide a 1/2 day mentoring session for an adult with autism

£50: we could enable a child with autism to participate in one of our research projects

To make a one-off donation, please use this form, call the Research Autism Line (**0117 974 8401**), visit www.researchautism.net/donate or text **RESA01** to **70070**

If you would prefer to make a regular payment via direct debit, please tick the box in section 3.

Keeping in touch

Research Autism would like to update you from time to time in order to inform you about our work. If you wish to receive mailings from us, please tick the box.

Alternatively you can sign up to receive information from us at www.researchautism.net/registration

1. My Details

Title First Name

Surname

Address

.....

Postcode Tel

email

2. I wish to make a one-off donation of

£10 £25 £50

Other amount (please specify)

By cheque (made payable to Research Autism)

Credit card Visa Switch Mastercard

Card Number:

Start Date: Expiry Date:

Issue Number (Switch only):

Signature

Date

3. Direct Debit

I would like to donate regularly by Direct Debit. Please send me a direct debit form.

4. *giftaid it*

Using Gift Aid means that for every pound you give we get an extra 28 pence from the Inland Revenue. So, if you want your support to go further, Gift Aid it.

Just tick the box – it's that simple. (To qualify for Gift Aid, what you pay in income tax or capital gains tax must at least equal the amount we will claim in the tax year.)

I want all donations I've made since 6 April 2000, and any donations I make in the future, to be Gift Aid donations until I declare otherwise.

5. Please return this form to:

Research Autism,
Church House, Church Road,
Filton, Bristol BS34 7BD.