The Seaver Autism Center’s sixteenth annual Advances in Autism Conference was held this past fall at Mount Sinai School of Medicine (MSSM) and included several scientific presentations, as well as breakout workshops presented in conjunction with our community partners. Participants included psychiatrists and several other health care professionals, educators, family members, and advocates. They learned about current model systems of autism; advances in understanding the causes of autism and novel treatment possibilities; and current pharmacological, behavioral, educational, and group treatments of autism. “It was a wonderful conference, and I intend on attending next year as well. The speakers were excellent, and the information was cutting edge,” said one conference participant.

“We were happy to welcome an increased number of participants, and we enjoyed the opportunity to discuss the field of autism spectrum disorders with researchers, advocates, and family members,” said Dr. Joseph Buxbaum, Director of the Seaver Autism Center.

The morning included three scientific presentations by Drs. Joseph Buxbaum, Timothy Roberts, and Walter Kaufmann, as well as a personal presentation by Jamie Rosenblum. The afternoon featured a keynote presentation by Dr. Simon Baron-Cohen and three breakout workshops focusing on treatments and services for individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

New Textbook

The Neuroscience of Autism Spectrum Disorders is a new volume edited by Drs. Joseph Buxbaum and Patrick Hof of Mount Sinai School of Medicine. It is a current survey and synthesis of the most important findings in the neuroscience of autism within the past 20 years, including such topics as etiology, neuropathology, imaging, and pathways/models. Several researchers within the Seaver Autism Center contributed chapters, including, Drs. Ozlem Bozdagi Gunal, Joseph Buxbaum, Guiqing Cai, Hala Harony-Nicolos, Alex Kolevzon, Latha Soorya, and Neha Uppal. The volume is an in-depth review of neurobiological research that increases understanding of and ability to treat ASDs, and it is a useful aid to parents and professionals alike. To learn more about this textbook, please visit http://tiny.cc/mountsinaitextbook.
For more information on the ASC, please see page 4.
Afternoon Workshops

▶ “PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS IN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS: FROM RESEARCH TO THE COMMUNITY”
KARI Y. PHILLIPS, LCSW, WESTCHESTER JEWISH COMMUNITY SERVICES
DANIELLE HALPERN, PSYD, SEAVER AUTISM CENTER, MSSM
TING WANG, PHD, SEAVER AUTISM CENTER, MSSM

In this workshop, the presenters discussed social impairments in autism, the evidence-based social skills intervention research that was conducted in a groundbreaking study at the Seaver Autism Center, the preliminary results of this study, and how this research can be brought into the community.

▶ “CURRENT TRENDS IN THE PHARMACOLOGICAL TREATMENT OF AUTISM: A PANEL OF EXPERTS”
PETER DELLA BELLA, MD, YAI
ALEX KOLEVZON, MD, SEAVER AUTISM CENTER, MSSM
CHARLES CARTWRIGHT, MD, YAI
DAVID GRODBERG, MD, SEAVER AUTISM CENTER, MSSM

This workshop summarized current autism treatments, such as n-acetylcysteine, riluzole, memantine, and oxytocin, and the panel of experts offered an extensive amount of time for questions from both parents and health care providers.

▶ “TRANSITIONING ACROSS THE SPECTRUM: A FOCUS ON EDUCATION, RESIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES, AND DAY PROGRAMMING”
MICHELLE GORENSTEIN-HOLTZMAN, PSYD, SEAVER AUTISM CENTER, MSSM
HARRY NUSSBAUM, F.E.G.S
KATHLEEN KINGSTON, NYS OFFICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
DIANNE ZAGER, PHD, PACE UNIVERSITY

Moderated by Dr. Gorenstein-Holtzman, this panel covered services during the transitional period from adolescence to adulthood for young people with autism, focusing on three main areas. The presenters’ brief presentations allowed for much-wanted question-and-answer time for workshop participants.

We would like to offer our sincere gratitude to all speakers, exhibitors, supporters, attendees, and to the Seaver Foundation for helping to make the annual Advances in Autism Conference possible.

If you would like to be notified about the 2013 conference, or if you could not attend and are interested in obtaining the materials, please email annualconference@seaverautismcenter.org.
Established in 2010 by Drs. Joseph Buxbaum and Matthew State (Yale University), the Autism Sequencing Consortium (ASC) is an international group of scientists who share ASD samples, data, and ideas in order to accelerate our understanding of the causes and treatments of ASD. All shared data and analysis is hosted here at MSSM on a super-computer designed by MSSM faculty. Dr. Arthur P. Goldberg, a Seaver Autism Center researcher and computer scientist, has led the development of the new ASC Bioinformatics Hub. The Hub resides on the super-computer and will be used to analyze the sequence of 28,000 individuals for genes implicated in autism, using a new method by which every gene in the genome will be sequenced. The Hub will allow for joint analysis of data from multiple groups, and thus will increase the speed by which autism genes are discovered and novel therapeutics are developed.

More Conference Highlights

Jamie Rosenblum, sibling of an adult with autism, gave a moving and heartfelt presentation on her experience growing up with a brother who has autism.

Mr. Hirschell Levine and Mr. John Cohen, Co-Trustees of the Seaver Foundation, presented welcoming remarks during the morning and afternoon sessions. Alexandra Roth-Kahn (Caring Commission of UJA-Federation of New York) and Lee Rambeau (F-E-G-S) also joined us for introductory remarks.

David Minot (Autism Spectrum News) discusses the newspaper with a conference participant. We were joined by many other exhibitors and community partners.