

Report by:

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My IMFAR experience began one day in advance, as I had the privilege of attending a pre-meeting, *New Directions in Autism Research and Treatment*, on the day preceding the main conference. The pre-meeting was hosted by the Center for Autism Research: Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and provided an overview of the significant advances and findings that are occurring in the field of autism research.

The following three days were filled with attending oral presentations, exploring the multitude of ASD research presented during the poster sessions, meeting other researchers and fellow students from around the world with similar research interests, and sharing our experiences and ongoing research. Invariably there were two or three presentations I wanted to attend occurring at the same time and it was always difficult to make the final decision. My own research interests are in the area of early identification and early intervention and I tended to gravitate to these presentations. One of the greatest benefits of attending IMFAR though, is the opportunity to be exposed to all areas of autism research. Keeping this in mind, I made a point of exploring both oral and poster presentations focusing on areas outside mine own focus.

Perhaps one of the most rewarding experiences this year was presenting research during the poster presentations with five other students from the University of Windsor. As a group, we presented two posters on the experiences,

perceptions, and impact of parents undertaking an intensive 12-week Applied Behaviour Analysis training program. This was not only an opportunity to present our research, but to learn from each other as our group was made up of undergraduate research assistants, and first, second, and third year graduate students. Each member of our group had something to offer and we are richer for the experience. This also served to broaden our overall exposure to the variety of research presented throughout the poster presentations as each member of the group had a variety of research interests and backgrounds.

One of my goals is to make ASD research more believable, accessible, and helpful to families of children with ASD and conduct research relevant to their concerns. Attending IMFAR continues to broaden my knowledge and understanding of what is happening in the field of ASD internationally and will help me to achieve this goal.

Attending IMFAR 2010 has further stimulated my curiosity and strengthened my motivation to continue learning and furthering my knowledge and research in the field of ASD. I am very grateful for the support provided by Autism Ontario that allowed me to attend the conference and I encourage other students involved in ASD research to attend IMFAR 2011.