

Report by:

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As a graduate student and young researcher it is important to attend conferences to present your research and to learn about what others are doing in the field. International conferences such as IMFAR allow for opportunities to socialize with students and professors and to develop collaborations and important working relationships. The IMFAR conference for 2009 was held in Chicago Illinois, and attracted over 1300 participants. Autism Ontario supported my attendance at the conference this year through a scholarship, which allowed me to present my current research in the form of a poster presentation.

My research focuses on trying to understand how young children integrate what they see and what they hear. For example, when we are talking to someone, we get visual information from seeing their lips and mouth move. We also get auditory information from listening to what they say. These two pieces, the visual and auditory, form a unitary piece of information, or what we understand when someone is talking to us. Previous research has shown that for children with autism, this integration of visual and auditory information may be disturbed and specifically for the understanding of language. At the IMFAR conference this year,

there were other attendees who were interested in exploring this deficit in integration in children and adults with Autism. It was exciting for me to see the interest in this area of research among national and international students and professors. I was able to meet with other attendees to discuss our presentations and explore some future areas of research. Attending presentations and talking with the researchers was beneficial for the development of my own research and ideas, which I am continuing on into my PhD.

One of the most exciting aspects of attending a conference like IMFAR is that it affords the opportunity to learn about so many other new areas of research in the field of Autism. Although my particular field of study is focused on cognition and development, I attended talks and presentations that dealt with genetics, education and diagnosis. Although these topics may not directly influence the future directions of my research, they certainly help to keep me aware of what is happening in the field of Autism.

I am look forward to attending the IMFAR conference next year, in 2010!