



## **Follow-Up of Children Who Were Diagnosed with ASD Before Age 3**

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Team Project Abstract  
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**Background:** Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that develops before age three and is characterized by impairments in social interaction, communication, and repetitive behavior. Early intervention has been shown to be effective, however, it is important to demonstrate that early diagnoses are valid. Woolfenden et al. (2012) conducted a systematic review showing 85% of children maintained a diagnosis of ASD from early age to later and 15% no longer did so. However, very few studies have followed children from early diagnosis to more than one-two years. Towle, Vacanti-Shova, Shah, and Higgins-D'Alessandro (2014) addressed this by following children from before age 3 to school age, and by expanding on areas of child outcome (e.g., school placement, adaptive behavior). The limitation of this study was that outcome diagnoses were based on parent report rather than direct clinical evaluations.

**Objective(s):** Our study is a continuation of the longitudinal study by Towle et al. (2014). The current study's three objectives were to examine: 1) agreement between diagnoses based on judgment versus in-person evaluations; 2) diagnostic outcomes in terms of levels of autism severity; and 3) functional characteristics at follow-up including adaptive behavior, educational placement, and social communication.

Methods: All participants were originally identified via chart review of young children with ASD evaluated for the Early Intervention Program at Westchester Institute of Human Development. Follow-up data were and are being collected through mailed questionnaires, a follow-up phone interview, and in-person evaluations. The questionnaires mailed to the parents included the Gilliam Autism Rating Scale-3, Social Communication Questionnaire, Autism Spectrum Rating Scale, an extensive Parent Questionnaire and Past Intervention Questionnaire. After the parent returns the packet, the Vineland II is administered over the phone. An in-person evaluation at the WIHD uses the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule-2 and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale of Children-IV (Abbreviated) or otherwise the Leiter International Performance Scale-Revised, depending on the child's verbal level.

Community Partners: Information regarding the Early Intervention Program in Westchester County was provided by the Assistant Commissioner of Westchester County of Health, Marina Yoegel, MA, CCC-SLP.

Progress-to-Date: Participants were re-recruited from chart reviews (n=11) and new participants (n=4) were recruited so that there are now approximately 65 total participants between past, re-recruited, and new participants, with the age range of 7 to 18 years of age. Currently, 14 packets have been sent out and 6 have been returned, yielding a return rate of 43%. Four children have been given the cognitive tests and three have been given the ADOS-2. The data is being entered into the computer and descriptive statistics will be generated using SPSS.

Next Steps: New and re-recruited participants will be added until there is a sufficient number to make a valid estimate of the judgment-based diagnoses. The new data will be added to the existing data to re-analyze and address questions of distribution of autism severity outcome and the functional and behavioral characteristics that accompany different levels of outcome.