



OAR Funds Five New Autism Research Studies and Announces Opening of 2005 Applied Autism Research Competition

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Wendy McKinnon, Programs and Outreach Associate
(703)243-3466, scholarship@researchautism.org

Arlington, VA - At its annual meeting on October 30, 2004, the Organization for Autism Research's (OAR) Board of Directors approved five new applied autism research studies for funding in 2005. This additional \$150,000 in research grants will bring the total of OAR awarded funds to \$370,000 since OAR awarded its first grants in January, 2003. These research studies, which will be conducted by autism professionals from across the country, will examine timely issues that affect the autism community everyday.

The topics of this year's new research, which will be completed in the next 12 months, include: Improving social skills using computer-based intervention, joint attention intervention for children with autism, assessment of characteristics of students with Asperger Syndrome, early identification of autism, and family-focused cognitive-behavioral intervention for anxiety symptoms for children with high-functioning autism or Asperger Syndrome.

"These were the five most outstanding studies in terms of design, methodology and potential to produce meaningful outcomes," explained Peter Gerhardt, Ed.D. Chairman of OAR's Scientific Council. "In fact, the findings from these studies offer to provide practical tools and resources for use by parents, teachers, caregivers and medical professionals that would enhance current methods of diagnosis, education, and treatment."

Recipients of the 2004 grants include: Kevin Ayres, M.A., from the University of Georgia, Emily Jones, Ph.D., BCBA and Kathleen M. Feeley, Ph.D., BCBA from Long Island University, Brenda Smith Myles, Ph.D., from the University of Kansas, Karen Pierce, Ph.D. and Eric Courchesne, Ph.D., The University of California, San Diego, and Judy Reaven, Ph.D. and Susan Hepburn, Ph.D., The University of Colorado. OAR selected these proposals from an initial group of 42 pre-proposals received in response to the Request for Proposals (RFP) issued in March. 24 proposals were carried through to the final review, where these five studies were selected as the most outstanding. Each grant winner will receive up to \$30,000.

In addition, OAR recently opened the 2005 Applied Research Grant Competition and is currently accepting pre-proposals. Pre-proposals are due April 15, 2005 and OAR is seeking to fund studies that will likely produce practical objective results that may aid parents, families, caregivers, and people with autism to make more fully informed choices that will lead to healthier and happier lives. The maximum grant award will be \$30,000 and funding will begin January, 2006. For complete RFP information, visit <http://www.researchautism.org/rfp.asp>.

For abstracts of OAR's 2004 winning studies, visit <http://www.researchautism.org/awards.asp>. For more information on the studies or OAR's Applied Research Competition, contact Caitlin McBair,

at 703-351-5031, cmcbrair@researchautism.org.

About OAR: The Organization for Autism Research was formed by parents and grandparents of children and adults with autism in December 2001. Recognizing that autism affects over 500,000 individuals in the United States alone, these founding Board members wanted to create a research foundation that would focus on practical research for the generation of people living with autism today. OAR, born of this vision, seeks to use applied research to help with the challenges parents, families, individuals with autism, teachers and caregivers confront every day. With this mission always in mind, OAR stimulates and funds research that offers practical insight and outcomes related to autism treatment, education, and research, and also provides the autism community with resources and information programs based on this applied research. In its first three years, OAR has awarded 12 grants totaling \$360,000 for applied research pilot studies, made \$11,000 in grants to graduate students conducting research related to autism and published two community-friendly resource guides in our *Life Journey through Autism* guide series: *A Parent's Guide to Research* and *An Educator's Guide*.