



OAR Announces Winners of 2003 Research Grant Competition

January 8th, 2004

ARLINGTON, VA, — The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) announced the results of its 2003 Applied Research Competition today, awarding \$60,000 in grants to fund studies by Edward Carr, Ph.D., at the State University of New York at Stony Brook and Lawrence Scahill, MSN, Ph.D. and a research team at the Yale Child Study Center in New Haven, CT. Three more proposed studies remain under consideration for funding early this year. These awards bring OAR's total to four studies funded and \$120,000 in research grants in the past 12 months.

This announcement marks the culmination of a 9-month long research competition that began with 26 proposals. OAR's Scientific Council narrowed the initial field to 11 studies, which were then put through a rigorous review and scoring process. From that, five studies emerged as finalists. Of those, Dr. Carr's and Dr. Scahill's were approved for immediate funding.

At Yale, Dr. Scahill's study, entitled Social Skills Development in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, will look at the effects of a 12-week intensive group intervention program designed to promote "social motivation" and "appropriate social behaviors" in children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Suzanne Letso, MA, BCBA, a member of OAR's Scientific Council and one of the study's principal evaluators, explains the significance of the study. "It will contribute to our knowledge of the utilization of applied behavior analytic educational strategies within a group training context. These educational strategies may ultimately be used in public school classrooms, recreational activities and community settings. This study also may lay the ground work for future studies by identifying socially significant target skills that can be effectively taught by peers, as well as the best ways to train and support peer tutors in natural settings."

Dr. Carr's study, Problem Behavior: The Development of a Contextual Assessment Inventory for Use by Families, focuses on decreasing problem behavior in persons with autism by developing an effective method to assess the cause or causes of the behavior. Identifying these factors will enable families and service providers to more effectively choose appropriate interventions to decrease or eliminate the behavior. Calling Carr's study "very timely," Shahla Alai Rosales, Ph.D., a member of OAR's Scientific Council, highlighted the potential benefit of Carr's research, "The resulting tool will be very useful to practitioners."

The remaining three studies cover a range of topics, including imitation skills in young children with autism, peer relationships in middle school between children with autism and their typical classmates, and social integration of adults with autism in the workplace. While each was highly rated, OAR's Scientific Council has proposed modifications to strengthen the design and methodology. OAR will reconsider each and make any additional grants by the end of March.

Abstracts of both [Dr. Scahill's](#) and [Dr. Carr's](#) studies are available online at www.researchautism.org. For more information on the studies or for information on OAR's annual research competition, contact [Mike Maloney](#), Executive Director, at 703-351-5031 or mmaloney@researchautism.org.