

International Autism Conference: Pathways to an Inclusive Life

Feb 22-24, 2018

Mumbai

A Report

The International Autism Conference: Pathways to an Inclusive Life was a 3 –day event with day 1 devoted to Pre-conference Workshop. The Conference was organised by SOPAN in collaboration with Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital and NIEPMD. A report of the proceedings of the conference and the pre-conference sessions is given below. The Conference was attended by nearly 270 participants from India and other countries. The resource persons consisted of experts from India, USA, UK, Israel, Germany and Bangladesh.

Feb. 22, 2018: Pre-Conference Workshop

The Pre-Conference Proceeding included 5 day long workshops on issues related with autism intervention. The table provides a summary of each

Time	Topic	Content	Resource Persons
10.00am -5.00pm	Augmentative and Alternative Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need & Importance of Communication• Concept of AAC• Types of AAC• AAC and Autism	Dr. Sudha Kaul Ms. Madhvi Tambay
10.00am -5.00pm	Sensory Integration for Autism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nature & needs of autism• Sensory features• Concept of sensory integration• Sensory integration for children with autism	Dr. Anjali Joshi
10.00am -5.00pm	Drama for autism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concept of drama and movement• Drama and its therapeutic value for all• Need of drama therapy for autism• Simulated drama practice	Dr. Parshuram Ramamurthy
10.00am -5.00pm	Teaching Visually	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Characteristics of	Ms. Linda Hagood,

	Impaired Children with Autism	<p>visually impaired children with autism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need and importance of communication • Strategies for teaching communication and social skills to visually impaired children with autism 	USA
10.00am -5.00pm	Management of Tuberous Sclerosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature and needs of children with Tuberous Sclerosis • Commonly used interventions • Evidenced based strategies for management of Tuberous Sclerosis 	Dr. Darcy Krueger Ms. Katie Smith USA

Feb 23 – 24, 2018: **Main Conference**

The 2- day Main conference was inaugurated by Shri Atul Bhatkhalkar, Member Legislative Assembly, Maharashtra in the presence of the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer of the Ambani hospital, and Dr. Himangshu Das, Director, NIEPMD, Trustees of SOPAN, invited guests, resource persons and participants. The book 'Autism: pathways to an Inclusive Life' was released during the inaugural function. The book has ISBN number and consists of selected papers that were going to be presented at the conference. Subsequently the book was made available on the websites of Amazon, Flipkart and Blue Rose Publishers, Delhi.

Keynote Speech: Dr. Pratibha Karanth was invited to deliver the keynote speech. Dr. Karanth's work in the area of autism is well known. She spoke about the need for early intervention and inclusive education of children with autism. She also shared the achievements and challenges faced in autism intervention by her organization COMDEALL in Bangalore. Dr. Karanth's presentation was very focussed and was appreciated by all.

Plenary Session 1: Early Childhood Education

The session included presentations by invited speakers from India and Israel. The key note speaker was Dr. Pragnya Gadgil from Ambani Hospital. She presented the neurological perspective to autism as a developmental disorder. Dr. Hanna Alonim from Israel, was invited to talk on early screening of children (below 12 months) at risk of autism. Her presentation emphasised the need for early screening and family intervention. Dr. Pranjali Sathe, from SOPAN, provided the paediatrician's viewpoint to early diagnosis of autism and the importance of family intervention and counselling. The session was chaired by Dr. G.F. Kerawalla.

Plenary Session 2: Integrated and Inclusive Education

Dr. Dinaz Wadia, from Mumbai was the key note speaker for the session. Her presentation focused on trans-disciplinary approach to intervention of autism. She explained the concept with respect to Disha Centre run by her. She was followed by Ms. Lama Alohal, a senior Speech and Language Therapist from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. She spoke about the need for family involvement and family education in autism intervention. Dr. Deepa Sundareswaran, from NIEPMD, presented on the sensory processing and problem behaviour in children with ASD. The session was chaired by Dr. Sudesh Mukhopadhyay

Plenary Session 3: Preparation for Adulthood

This session included presentations on preparation of adolescents with autism for adulthood. The keynote speaker, Ms. Sampada Shevde spoke about the use of person centred planning for preparation for adulthood. She augmented her presentation by video clips of young people being oriented to community living and job training. Ms. Kavita Sharma from Bangalore, presented on the work done by her and her team at Prayas, and ICT training unit for persons with autism at Bangalore. Dr. Balabhaskar from NIEPMD, presented on skill training for persons with autism with reference to National Action Plan for Persons with Disability. Ms. Pavitra Desai, from Ambani Hospital, discussed the content and methods for preparation to adulthood. The session was chaired by Dr. Abhishek Srivastava

Plenary Session 4: Employment and Human Resource Development

Dr. Rubina Lal from SOPAN, was the key note speaker. She presented a critical analysis of teacher preparation programs in India with reference to autism education. She described the assets and the limitations of existing teacher preparation programs and delineated what needs to be done for inclusive education of children with autism. Dr. Martina Schebert from Germany, described the efforts made in Germany to provide suitable vocational training and employment to persons with autism. Ms. Giselle Lobo's presentation was based on her research in the area of teacher training in UDL and the effect of the training on academic achievement of children with autism. The session was chaired by Dr. Himangshu Das, director, NIEMPD.

Plenary Session 5: Living within Community

Ms. Bonnie Brown from UK, in her keynote presentation spoke about the strategies used at Cricket Green School , UK to enhance the community living skills of students with autism. She also emphasised the need for parent counselling in this. Mr. Naren, a senior financial planner talked on how parents and family can invest so that a person with autism can live a comfortable life in adulthood. Mr. Mofizul Islam from Bangladesh, presented on the various initiatives taken in Bangladesh for capacity building of persons with autism. Ms. Marcelle Ciampi, a person with Asperger Syndrome from USA was invited to speak on self-advocacy. As she was unwell she sent a video presentation of her talk that focused on her journey and the support required by her from the community. The session was chaired by Dr. Shaunak Ajinkya from Ambani Hospital.

Paper Presentation Session 1: Feb 23, 2018

The session 1 of paper presentation included 12 parallel presentations. The topic were in consonance with the plenary session 1 and 2

Paper Presentation Session 2: Feb 24, 2018

The session 2 of the paper presentations included 9 parallel presentations based on the topics covered within plenary sessions 3, 4, and 5.

Poster Presentations: Feb 23-24, 2018

A total of 6 posters were presented. The topics were in consonance with the various plenary sessions within the Conference.

The International Autism Conference ended with a valedictory session. The session was chaired by Dr. Pradnya Gadgil, Paediatric Neurologist from Ambani Hospital.

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List of resource persons for the pre-conference workshops

Workshop	Resource person
Augmentative and Alternative Communication	Senior Speech & Language Therapist & Associate Faculty, BharatiVidyapeeth University's School of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, India
Sensory Integration Intervention	Dr. Anjali Joshi Senior Occupational Therapist, & Specialist in Sensory Integration Therapy, India
Drama for Autism	Mr. Parasuram Ramamoorthi Drama Therapist & Former Professor of Theatre Arts , Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, India
Teaching visually impaired children with autism	Linda Hagood Speech and Language Pathologist, Massachusetts, USA
Management of Tuberous Sclerosis	Dr. Darcy Krueger MD, PhD, Director, Tuberous Sclerosis Clinic, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. Ms. Katie Smith Tuberous Sclerosis Alliance

List of resource persons for the Conference Plenary sessions

Topic	Resource Person
Plenary Session 1: Early Childhood Education	
Autism: A Neurologist's Perspective	Dr. Pradnya Gadgil, Neurologist, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Mumbai, India
Identification of autism in the first year of life	Dr. Hanna Alonim Head, Mifne Centre & Bar Ilan University, Israel
Identification of autism in the first year of life	Dr. Pranjal Sathe Kale Developmental Paediatrician, Mumbai, India

Plenary Session 2: Integrated and Inclusive Education	
Trans-disciplinary Approach: the Disha Model	Ms. Dinaz Wadia Senior Speech & Language Therapist, Director, Disha
Development of Social Communication: Focus on Family based Intervention	Ms. Lama Alohali Speech and Language Therapist & Member, Autism Multidisciplinary Team, King Abdulaziz Medical City, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Sensory processing and problem behaviour in children with Autism Spectrum Disorders	Dr. Deepa Sundareswaran Occupational Therapist, NIEPMD, Chennai, India
Plenary Session 3: Preparation for Adulthood	
Preparing Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and Multiple Disabilities for Adulthood	Ms. Sampada Shevde Director of Perkins Voice and Vision in India
ICT: Creating Workforce of Persons with Autism	Ms. Kavita Sharma Founder Director of Project - 'PRAYAS', a Computer and iPad Training Center for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders & Vice President (North) of Autism Society of India, Bangalore, India
Skill Training for Individuals with Autism in reference to National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities	Dr. K. Balabaskar , NIEPMD, Chennai, India
The When, What and How of Preparation into Adulthood	Ms. Pavitra Desai Psychologist, KokilabenDhirubhaiAmbani Hospital, Mumbai, India
Plenary Session 4: Employment and human resource Development	
Teacher Preparation Programs in India: Focus on Autism	Dr. Rubina Lal Founder Trustee, SOPAN & Principal, Suvidya Centre of Special Education, Mumbai, India
Sheltered Employment for Person with Autism: Making everyone productive	Dr. Martina Schabert Autism-Competence Centre, Munich, Germany
UDL: Creating a Dynamic Classroom	Ms. Giselle Lobo Teacher Educator & Expert in Inclusive Education, Goa, India
Plenary Session 5: Living within the Community	

Living within community: The Cricketgreen School Model	Ms. Bonnie Brown, Vice Principal, Cricketgreen School, United Kingdom
The 5A's of Inclusion	Ms. Samantha Craft Educator & ASD Advocate, USA
Planning for a Financially Secure Future	Mr. S. Naren Executive Director & Chief Investment Officer, ICICI Prudential AMC, India
Capacity Building of persons with autism through living with family and Community	Mr. Md. Mofijul Islam Deputy Director, SWAC, Bangladesh