

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Autism Spectrum Disorder

More and more interesting examination is occurring regarding Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Autistic Disorder and Aspergers are two of the several types of ASD. There are also several types of disorders that fall under the FASD umbrella, including Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND), Partial Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (pFAS), and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). As research around each spectrum of syndromes builds we learn more about the complexities of both FASD and ASD, and while interesting enough separately, overlaps and questions regarding both syndromes continue to arise.

In an article published in 2007, Somer Bishop, Sheila Gahagan and Catherine Lord attempt to compare the core features of ASD and FASD. Results showed that children with ASD could be clearly differentiated from children with FASD as they demonstrated greater deficits in reciprocal social interaction, communication, and restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour. Difficulties interacting with peers and socially inappropriate behaviours were common in both children with ASD and FASD. In general, children with FASD and ASD demonstrated a different social profile.

Interestingly, NeuroDevNet (www.neurodevnet.ca), launched in December 2009, is the first Canada-wide initiative dedicated to studying children's brain development from both basic and clinical perspectives. The initial focus of NeuroDevNet is on three conditions: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and Cerebral Palsy (CP). "There's a huge amount of interplay between our understanding of each of these and how the brain develops," says Dr. Goldowitz, scientific director for the organization.

A number of individuals have both ASD and FASD. There are now more cases of youth and children attending the Asante Centre for an assessment and possible diagnosis where there is a question of both the presence of ASD and FASD. This is not surprising as both ASD and FASD are characterized by social difficulties, though clinical descriptions of those deficits tend to differ. With the expertise of the clinical team and growing research differentiating between the two syndromes, the questions regarding the presence of ASD and FASD can be answered. It is important for individuals and their families to be aware of the diagnosis that best describes the disability as it will impact treatment plans and outcomes for the future. As a result, other co-occurring syndromes (in addition to FASD and ASD) need to be considered when a diagnosis is made.

Bishop, S., Gahagan, S., and Lord, C. *Re-examining the core features of autism: a comparison of autism spectrum disorder and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.* *Journal of Psychology and Psychiatry.* 48:11 (2007), pp 1111-1121.

"Recognizing and respecting differences in others, and treating everyone like you want them to treat you, will help make our world a better place for everyone. Care... be your best. You don't have to be handicapped to be different. Everyone is different!"

- Kim Peek (Inspiration for Rain Man)

If you would like to be removed from the newsletter mailing list, please contact the Asante Centre at newsletter@asantecentre.org.

Mark Your Calendars

Parent Support Groups

FASD/CDBC Key Workers host support groups for caregivers of children with FASD in locations across the province. Visit the Asante Centre website for contact information of the Key Worker in your area.

11th Annual Transition Planning Fair for Young Adults with Special Needs

April 19, 2010, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

William E. Lucas Continuing Education Centre
North Vancouver

4th National Biennial Conference on Adolescents and Adults with FASD

April 14-17, 2010

Hyatt Regency Vancouver

<http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/Adults.html>

3rd Annual FASD Forum: Creating Change

October 22-23, 2010

Douglas College, New Westminster

See Events and News at www.asantecentre.org

4th International Conference on FASD

March 2-5, 2011

Westin Bayshore Hotel, Vancouver

<http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/FASD.htm>

Asante Centre's Speech and Language Services


Have you heard? Jamie Hack is now at the Asante Centre, working with children to help improve their speech and language skills! Please call the Centre for more information if you know a child who needs help communicating.

There are also communication groups planned at the Asante Centre this summer. Children learn a lot about communication from one another. Groups are available for school-aged children with FASD and ASD. You can contact the speech-language department at the Asante Centre to find out more about group opportunities or to place your child on the list.



THE ASANTE CENTRE
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SANTE CENTRE

YOUTH PROBATION OFFICERS' GUIDE TO FASD SCREENING AND REFERRAL

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Kwadwo Ohene Asante, MBChB, FRCPC
Funded by the Department of Justice Canada
Supported by the Ministry of Children and Family Development

New Resource: Youth Probation Officers' Guide to FASD Screening and Referral

The Asante Centre is pleased to announce the release of the new *Youth Probation Officers' Guide to FASD Screening and Referral*! The Guide is centred on the previously developed *FASD Screening and Referral Tool for Youth Probation Officers*, which has been used in the Fraser and Vancouver Coastal Regions to refer individuals to the Centre's Youth Justice FASD Program since 2003. The goal to make the screening tool available across Canada has been accomplished through the development of the accompanying guidebook, which includes the necessary background information to use the tool appropriately and in context. The guidebook has been realized with the support of the Department of Justice Canada and the Ministry for Children and Family Development.

The screening tool and guidebook have been recognized by the Canadian Association of Pediatric Health Centres (CAPHC) and selected by the Taskforce for the Development of FASD Screening Tools for inclusion in their toolkit of promising screens for identifying individuals at risk of having FASD and therefore requiring a full FASD assessment. The *Youth Probation Officers' Guide to FASD Screening and Referral* as well as a printer-friendly version of the *FASD Screening and Referral Tool for Youth Probation Officers* is also available for download on the Asante Centre website.

Change in Referral Process for Fraser Health Region

As of April 1, 2010, the Fraser Health Assessment Network (FHAN) is no longer in operation, as the referral and intake process to the BC Autism Assessment Network (BCAAN) and the Complex Developmental and Behavioural Conditions Network (CDBC) have been centralized across the lower mainland. All referrals for children and youth, aged 0-19 and living in the Fraser and Vancouver Coastal Health Regions, who require assessment for FASD, ASD or other CDBC will be processed through Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children in Vancouver. Intake will now be managed through the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) and reflects the previously existing referral processes. PHSA will continue to contract with diagnostic teams, such as the Asante Centre, throughout the Fraser Region to perform publically funded assessments. Thank you to the team at FHAN, your dedication to children at-risk has been much appreciated. For information on new and existing referrals, please contact (604) 453-8300 ext. 8294 (for ASD queries) or 604-453-8300 ext. 8381 (for FASD/CDBC queries).

Connection Between FASD and Epilepsy

According to new research based out of Queen's University, children with FASD show a very high prevalence of developing epilepsy and having seizures. It was noted that six per cent of study participants had epilepsy and 12 percent had one or more seizures in their lifetimes. By comparison, less than one percent of the general population is expected to develop epilepsy. The study results also showed that individuals were more likely to have epilepsy, or a history of seizures, if exposure to alcohol had occurred in the first trimester or throughout the entire pregnancy. For more information on the study and results, read the full article at <http://esciencenews.com/>.

FASD Tip: Making a Life Book


Some individuals with FASD, particularly adults, may find it helpful to create a Life Book*. The goal of a Life Book is to help the person structure their days and encourage self-advocacy. A Life Book can be a simple three ring binder with paper for notes, a calendar, contact information, plastic sleeves for keeping business cards and other documents, and divider pages for the main aspects of the person's life. Include sections of information on medical matters, school, money, housing, life, talents and any other aspects that an individual may want help with remembering and maintaining structure. Include copies of all important documents, such as care cards and ID in case they get lost. Try keeping a diary, including hopes and dreams for the future, the person's strengths and their challenges.

*Adapted from *The Long Way to Simple* (Neafcy, 2008).

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Preventing Heavy Alcohol Use in Girls

On Tuesday, April 20th, Nancy Poole will be presenting for the Women's Health: Practice and Policy Series on ways to prevent heavy alcohol use in girls. The event will take place at the BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre between 12:00 and 1:00 p.m. For more information, including video and telephone conferencing options, please visit the Events and News calendar at www.asantecentre.org.

 The Asante Centre would like to give a special **thank you** to the **Stewart and Jean Thompson Children's Foundation**, for their donation of \$4500. Stewart and Jean Thompson have dedicated monies from their estate to benefit children at risk, particularly those with disabilities. The Centre is grateful to be one of the charities to receive funds this year, as are the children for whom we were able to provide service for, through the compassion of this family.

What can you do?

Become a member of the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

Society for British Columbia!

Name/or Organization: _____

Your Charitable Donations are appreciated.

Mailing Address: _____

Donation (tax receipt provided): _____

Phone: _____

Send cheque or money order to:

Email: _____

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!