

Medication Use and ASD

I BECAME REALLY INTERESTED

in the issue of medication use among individuals with ASD through my work at the Autism Research Unit and the Autism Treatment Network. I am now completing a CAMH post doctoral fellowship to pursue this line of research with Dr. Yona Lunskey. Our first project focused on medication use in adults with ASD who were living with family or in group homes. We looked at the medication profiles of a group of 142 adults, trying to understand how often they were taking multiple medications (which we call "polypharmacy"), and what accounts for why some of these adults were in this situation. We found that over one half of adults were prescribed psychotropic medications, with just over one quarter taking two or more. Results suggested that adults with ASD are a highly medicated population and that polypharmacy is a significant concern. To better understand these issues, we are now examining medication use in a larger, Ontario-based sample. This time, in addition to studying medication patterns, we will also explore how medication use is related to the use of other services, and to parent stress. As part of my post doctoral fellowship, I will be surveying parents to learn more about reasons for medication prescriptions, as well as what parents are concerned about in terms of medication monitoring and medication side effects. I hope also to get some ideas from families about what is needed to improve how we monitor medication use in this sector. We look forward to sharing the results of this important and exciting research with you in the next issue of *Autism Matters*, Spring 2013.

Johanna Lake, Canadian Association for Mental Health

Those interested in learning more about this research may contact Johanna Lake at CAMH.johanna.lake@camh.ca. ■

New Autism Advocacy Network

THE AUTISM ADVOCACY NETWORK is a group of professional individuals who are committed to providing best practice special educational advocacy across the province of Ontario. The main goal is to assist individuals and families to navigate the education system.

The Autism Advocacy Network will focus on positive proactive strategies and each participant will strive to:

- Facilitate improved communication between home and school.
- Provide information about the special education process.
- Assist parents in understanding the acronyms used within the education system: (IPRC, IEP, SNC).
- Inform parents of their rights and responsibilities and those of the education system.
- Share resources that will assist in understanding the special education process.
- Provide direct support and/or suggestions for individual situations.
- Provide education and coaching to empower families to advocate on their children's behalf.
- Provide in-school support, when requested.

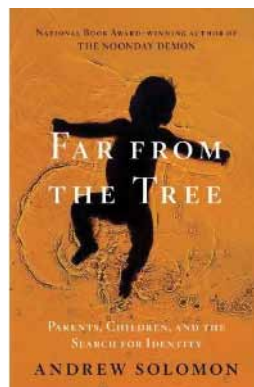
Advocacy Services:

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|----------------|------------------------|
| • Workshops | Meeting Attendance |
| • Consultation | Letter Writing |
| • Coaching | IEP and Program Review |

For more information contact Patricia O'Connor, Integrated Autism Consulting, www.integratedautismconsulting.com. ■



Book Review



Far from the Tree

by Andrew Solomon

USING SCIENCE, cultural trends and intimate lived experience, Andrew Solomon explores American parental activism, the diagnostic odyssey, treatment options and subtle differences within individual autisms, love and acceptance from a parental perspective. Solomon explores expectations, inner resources and what it means for ordinary families to face extraordinary challenges.

Autism Ontario was delighted to host Andrew Solomon on April 2, 2013 at the Brazen Head Pub in Toronto for *In Their Words*: an evening supporting autism. ■

