

THIS STUDY NO LONGER RECRUITING

Name of Study: Assessing Information Processing and Capacity for Understanding Language in Non-Verbal and Minimally Verbal Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Locations: Rutgers University, Center for Molecular and Behavioral Neuroscience, Newark, NJ
Graduate Center of the City University of New York, New York, NY

Eligibility Criteria: Non-verbal or minimally verbal children diagnosed with autistic disorder

Principal Investigators: April A. Benasich, Ph.D. and Valerie Shafer, Ph.D.

Contact Information: Dr. Judy Flax at jflax@andromeda.rutgers.edu, Zena Fermano at fermano@biology.rutgers.edu or by phone at the Rutgers laboratory at 973-353-3593

Dear Parents,

We are pleased to announce a research initiative funded by Autism Speaks with the goal of assessing and studying the language processing and language comprehension abilities of non-verbal or minimally verbal children with autism.

Using behavioral tasks and a special type of EEG (called an ERP), we will attempt to assess children who, until this point, have been difficult to test using traditional language and cognitive tests. The behavioral tasks are similar to the kinds of non-standardized and observational testing that is often done with younger children. The EEG/ERP sessions are passive in that the children are not required to actively respond to any items. They wear a spongy net on their heads that records brain activity while visual and auditory stimuli are presented.

The study may involve several sessions. First we will conduct a detailed telephone interview to determine whether your child is eligible for the study. From our piloting work, we have found that children who have extreme sensitivity to touch around the head or face area or who have difficulty wearing hats, may not be able to tolerate the net although it is very light, soft, and non-invasive.

If your child is eligible and you are interested in participating, research staff will come to your home or school to train your child to wear the ERP net using conditioning techniques similar to the types that may be used at school during teaching. If net application is successful, we would then invite you to the laboratory for one to three sessions to run the experimental tasks. The labs are set up to specifically to work with children, so they are a very non-threatening, supportive environment where both children and parents can feel comfortable. There are always several staff member available to answer any questions or concerns that you have, and we are always interested in your feedback and observations.

Since all of these tasks are experimental, there are no direct scores or results to report. However, you will receive a letter that explains each task in which your child participated and his/her reactions and responses to what was presented. There are no charges for participating in the study, and you will receive \$20.00 for each session that you attend in the lab.

If you would like to learn more about our study, please contact Dr. Judy Flax at jflax@andromeda.rutgers.edu, Zena Fermano at fermano@biology.rutgers.edu, or the Rutgers laboratory at 973-353-3593.

We look forward to hearing from you.

April A. Benasich, Ph.D.

Valerie Shafer, Ph.D.

IAN Research ID SR00265