

Despite the known benefits of early identification and care for autistic children, access to diagnostic and support services for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) families remains limited. In this project, we lay the foundation for programmatic changes in the services and settings available to support CLD communities during the early years of an autistic child's life to improve child and caregiver outcomes.

The Challenge

Disparities exist at each stage of the process of early autism identification and service provision. For example, in comparison to non-CLD children, CLD children with autism are diagnosed at older ages and utilize autism-specialized services less frequently.

Development of culturally sensitive materials and dissemination strategies are needed to address this gap in diagnosis and care.

The Approach

The READI lab at the University of Washington conducts research on early identification and care for children with autism in underserved settings. Mother Africa is a culturally-embedded community-based organization (CBO) in Washington that supports refugee and immigrant families from Africa and the Middle East. We used co-design principles to develop a culturally-sensitive curriculum translated into six languages that lay providers could use with CLD caregivers to facilitate entry and movement along the autism identification and service pipeline. We utilized task-shifting principles to capitalize on existing infrastructure in this organization to develop a scalable, low-resource training tutorial for increasing the number, type, and settings in which providers can use the curriculum to assist families in entering the autism identification and service pipeline.

To test the effectiveness of the workbook and implementation plan, we conducted a clinical trial investigating the feasibility and effectiveness of the co-created resources administered by non-profit workers without a healthcare background.

The Impact

The Family Care project resulted in clinical and community impacts and has the potential to further create community, economic, and policy impacts.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

The Family Care Project resulted in:

- **The development of a 40-page culturally-sensitive workbook translated into six languages for use with families of children with social-communication delays or autism characteristics.**
- **The demonstrated feasibility and effectiveness of our novel dissemination approach using lay providers in a culturally-embedded community-based organization.**



Key Benefits



CLINICAL

The study team created a flexible and modular curriculum to support caregiver and child wellbeing



COMMUNITY

The Family Care project developed community capacity in a novel site to care for young children and their families with autism or social-communication challenges



COMMUNITY

This project strengthened relationships between the academic research community and community organizations



ECONOMIC

The cost of establishing the program likely will be far less than traditional care programs and has the potential to decrease the long-term economic needs of autism on society, caregivers, and autistic individuals

The team:

Co-Investigators: Shana Attar, MS, Hannah Benavidez, MS, and Wendy Stone, PhD

Department of Psychology, University of Washington and Carol Gicheru, BA, Colleen Alabi, MS, Risho Sapano, MS of Mother Africa

Find out more:

https://www.iths.org/portfolio_page/stone-wendy/

Contact:

Shana Attar, M.S., University of Washington, sattar@uw.edu

Funding:

Pilot funding provided by the Institute of Translational Health Sciences (www.iths.org) under grant UL1 TR002319