

Editorial

Down Syndrome: Expanding Areas of Study

Salma Tarikh

I am pleased to introduce the anticipated second supplemental issue on Down syndrome. I have had the pleasure of working on this issue and I am excited by the areas in which the authors in this issue ventured, the questions they probed, the awareness they created, and the possibilities they generated for further studies.

The authors in this issue explored the challenges that individuals with Down syndrome experienced with visualizing images, self-imposing delay gratification, and initiating peer interactions. The authors in this issue also presented us with a new understanding about parental expectations and community perceptions of individuals—adults, adolescents, and children—with Down syndrome, and suggested ways to enrich the quality of life of such individuals.

In adults with Down syndrome, Brown and Bullitis explored the fairly novel area of visual imagery in individuals with intellectual disability and questioned the extent to which these individuals could visualize mental imagery. In adolescents with Down syndrome, Cuskelly and Stubbins examined the relationships between the ability to delay gratification and language, temperament and self regulation. In children with Down syndrome, Virji-Babul, Hovorka and Jobling looked at what these children do in the playground and how often they initiated a social exchange with peers and adults.

From these studies we have learned that individuals with intellectual disability often possess an awareness of imagery, although their verbal reports may suggest otherwise. We have learned that individuals with Down syndrome who have better expressive language are able to delay gratification longer, and how children with Down syndrome may need instructional scaffolding from their parents to initiate and sustain social interactions with peers.

But how can parents of children with Down syndrome be helped? Joosa and Berthelsen, in their study on mothers' expectations of parenting a child with Down syndrome showed us how parents could make more effective decisions about their child with Down syndrome, if social workers, health care workers and teachers were more sensitive and understanding of the family needs. Gilmore in her study on the perception of individuals with Down syndrome in the Australian community emphasized how personal knowledge of someone with Down syndrome could eliminate negative

and homogenous perceptions about individuals with Down syndrome. For example, Gilmore explained how a better grasp on the basis of community perceptions on Down syndrome, could help us turn away from the negative first impressions of “*mongols with a particular look in their staring type eyes*” into more positive thoughts of “*lovable, caring people ... trying to interact with the world around them.*”

Author

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