# 2021 RSIG Research Day Datablitz Presentations

***What is a Data Blitz?***
*Also known as "lightning talks," Data Blitz presentations are an unconventional and engaging method for sharing information. In this format, the presenter provides a synopsis of their research. Each presenter is given 5 minutes to convey their message. The goal of these presentations is to have fun!*

## Evaluation of Autism Ontario's Service Navigator Program

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[1]York University, [2]Autism Ontario

Autism Ontario, a not-for-profit advocacy organization for autistic individuals and their families, offers direct support to caregivers through the Service Navigation Program. The primary goals of the program are to offer families help with understanding the new Ontario Autism Program and to support families in navigating their local autism system.

The aims of the current study are to: (1) identify the demographics of caregivers who register for the program; (2) determine their level of distress and service needs, and (3) investigate the impact of using the program on caregiver feelings of empowerment and well-being after using the program. We hypothesize that parents/caregivers who use the Service Navigator program will report an above average level of distress and require the most help with navigating funding and service provisions for the new Ontario Autism Program. We also hypothesize that parents level of self-reported stress will decrease after using the Service Navigator program, while their levels of empowerment and overall quality of life with increase.

We plan to conduct a secondary analysis of data already collected by Autism Ontario for the purposes of internal program evaluation. Results of the current study may elucidate the usefulness of the program and inform potential enhancements to the program that would better serve caregivers and families of autistic people.

## Choosing Pivotal Response Treatment or the Picture Exchange Communication System for Improving Communication in Children with Autism: Review of the Relevant Child Characteristics

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With the goal of providing individualized intervention to children on the Autism Spectrum, clinicians are in need of guidance for choosing between evidence-based language and communication protocols based on their client's characteristics. Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT), a play-based intervention, and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), a protocol that utilizes picture cards, both target communication. The goal of this paper is to summarize the available knowledge regarding how the decision to implement PECS or PRT can be informed by child characteristics. While little research has prospectively predicted outcomes in response to these interventions based on pre-treatment characteristics, this study synthesizes decades' worth of studies on the factors that contribute to response or non-response to treatment. Child characteristics identified to predict success with PRT (e.g., toys interest, low avoidance, positive affect) and PECS (e.g., object interest, poor motor imitation, discrimination skills) are reviewed. Factors that appear to predict language gains in both interventions (e.g., chronological/developmental age, cognitive ability, joint attention, use of words [e.g., echolalia]) are also discussed. The profiles associated with suitability for PRT and PECS are described in detail, intending to provide a practical resource for clinicians and families who are making a treatment decision for children with Autism.

## COVID-19 Test Results Among a High-Risk Sample of Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disability in Ontario

*Rebecca Hansford[1], Dr. Helene Ouellette-Kuntz[1], & Dr. Lynn Martin[2]*
[1]Queen's University, [2]Lakehead University

**Objective:** To describe the demographic and clinical profiles of 111 adults with intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) who were tested for COVID-19 between March 1, 2020, and February 1, 2021.

**Methods:** Testing occurred if an individual was showing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or had a close contact who had tested positive. Results of COVID-19 tests were linked to home care assessment data (interRAI-HC and IDD Supplement). Chi-square tests with $p < 0.05$ were used to identify statistically significant associations between positive test results and select demographic and clinical variables. Odds ratios (OR) with 95% confidence intervals (CI) are reported for significant associations.

**Results:** Thirty-two positive cases were identified (28.82%). Individuals 45 years and older were more likely to test positive (OR=7.47; 95% CI, 2.75-20.28), as were those living in group homes (OR=3.48; 95% CI, 1.35-8.98). Those dependent in activities of daily living were less likely to test positive (OR=0.33; 95% CI, 0.12-0.93).

**Discussion/Conclusions:** This study is an important first step for identifying demographic and clinical factors that may increase COVID-19 risk among adults with IDD and influence the management of the infection in this population. Ongoing monitoring in this high-risk sample over the course of the pandemic will provide additional insights.

**Associations between Transdiagnostic Symptoms and Parent-Child Relationship Quality in Families of Children with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities**

*Nisha Vashi, Jonathan Weiss, & Yvonne Bohr*
York University

**Objective:** Parent-child relationship quality is linked to outcomes in children with neurodevelopmental disabilities (NDDs; Dennis et al., 2018). Few studies have examined how this relationship is influenced by child symptoms across various NDDs. The current study examines relations between transdiagnostic symptoms and parent-child relationship quality in families seeking treatment for child mental health problems.

**Method**: Parent-child dyads participated in cognitive-behavioural therapy for child mental health problems. Diagnoses included autism spectrum disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, learning disability, and cerebral palsy. Parent-child relationship quality was assessed with the Positive Affect Index (PAI; Bengtson & Schrader, 1982). Child symptoms assessed included social impairments, academic difficulties, internalizing/externalizing problems, IQ, executive functioning, and attention problems.

**Results**: Baseline PAI scores were negatively associated with IQ, social impairments, and externalizing problems, and IQ and externalizing problems uniquely predicted variance in baseline PAI scores. Children with severe social impairments and clinically significant externalizing problems had lower baseline PAI scores. Children with clinically significant academic difficulties had higher baseline PAI scores.

**Discussion/Conclusion**: Children with lower cognitive abilities and fewer clinical symptoms experienced more positive parent-child relationship quality. Future research will explore interactions between cognitive factors (e.g., IQ) and clinical symptoms (e.g., externalizing problems), and their links with parent-child relationship quality.