

Connie Kasari, Ph.D.

M.I.N.D. Institute Distinguished Lecturer Series – October 12, 2011

Biographical Information

Connie Kasari, Ph.D., is professor of Psychological Studies in Education and Psychiatry at UCLA, where she is also the principal investigator for several multi-site research programs, including the Autism Intervention Research Network for Behavioral Health funded by Health Resources and Services' Maternal and Child Health Bureau. Dr. Kasari received her Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and was a NIMH postdoctoral fellow at the Neuropsychiatric Institute at UCLA. Since 1990 she has been on the faculty at UCLA where she teaches both graduate and undergraduate courses, and has been the primary advisor to more than 30 PhD students. Kasari is a founding member of the Center for Autism Research and Treatment at UCLA and has been actively involved in autism research for the past 25 years, leading projects under the CPEA, STAART, and Autism Centers of Excellence programs from NIH. Her current research focuses on developing targeted interventions for early social communication development in at risk infants, toddlers and preschoolers with autism, and peer relationships for school aged children with autism. She is involved in several randomized controlled trials, with her most recent work involving multi-site studies for interventions aimed at underserved and under-represented populations of children with autism, and has published widely on topics related to social, emotional, and communication development and intervention in autism. She is on the treatment advisory board of the Autism Speaks Foundation, and regularly presents to both academic and practitioner audiences locally, nationally and internationally.

Presentation Abstract (4:30 pm)

Engaging Autism: Developmental implications for early interventions

Early interventions for autism are increasingly focused on early core developmental abilities. These include a focus on shared attention and affect, joint attention and social motivation to interact with others. Strong theoretical and empirical evidence documents how early learning is facilitated by interactions with others. In this presentation, Dr. Kasari will address targeted interventions for these important core developmental abilities, and how early interventions generate change in the short term and create a platform for later developmental growth. She will also illustrate these changes through our intervention research with toddlers, preschoolers, and school aged children with a particular focus on underserved, under-resourced children with ASD and their families.