

David S. Mandell, ScD

MIND Institute Distinguished Lecturer Series – February 12, 2014

Biographical Information

David S. Mandell, ScD, is Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine, where he directs the Center for Mental Health Policy and Services Research. He also is Associate Director of the Center for Autism Research at The Childrens Hospital of Philadelphia. The goal of his research is to improve the quality of care individuals with autism receive in their communities. This research is of two types. The first examines the effects of different state and federal strategies to organize, finance and deliver services, based on public-service use patterns and outcomes. The second consists of experimental studies designed to determine the best strategies to successfully implement proven-efficacious practices in community settings. Dr. Mandell is the author of more than 80 peer-reviewed scientific publications, many of which examine correlates of unmet need among children with psychiatric and developmental disabilities and strategies for reducing disparities. He co-chaired the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Autism Task Force from 2003 to 2006 and consults with the Department of Public Welfare to help them develop appropriate policies to meet the needs of families of children with autism. He currently serves as a member of the US Department of Health and Human Services Interagency Autism Coordinating Council. Dr. Mandell holds a bachelor of arts in psychology from Columbia University and a doctorate of science from the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health.

Presentation Abstract (4:30 pm presentation)

Storming the Ivory Tower: Using Community Partnerships, Policy Levers, and Other Sneaky Tricks to Improve Outcomes for People with Autism

The alarming increase in the number of individuals diagnosed with autism has given rise to two parallel public health crises. In most cases, this crisis is presented as the urgent need to identify the causes of this increase. An equally compelling component of this crisis is our society's inability to provide appropriate treatments and supports to the growing number of people diagnosed with autism and their families. In response to this challenge, the United States as a whole and many states individually have enacted legislation and other policy mechanisms, often in the absence of any evidence supporting them, to increase access to autism-related care. This presentation will review these mechanisms and the results of studies that attempt to measure the effects of these policies. While these mechanisms have in some cases increased access to care, it is not clear that they have increased quality of care or associated outcomes. In fact, most studies in this area suggest that evidence-based interventions for individuals with autism are not implemented in community settings the way they were designed, nor do they achieve the same outcomes observed in university-based research trials, regardless of the policy environment. This presentation also shares results from a line of research, conducted in partnership with community agencies, designed to determine the best ways to increase the use of evidence-based practice in publicly-funded service systems. The presentation ends with concrete suggestions for academic-public partnerships that both increase community-based quality of care for individuals with autism and advance science in this area.