

Jane Roberts, Ph.D.

MIND Institute Distinguished Lecturer Series – April 12, 2017

Biographical Information

Jane Roberts, Ph.D., is a professor of Psychology and the Director of the Neurodevelopmental Disorders Research Lab at the University of South Carolina. She received her Ph.D. at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1998. Dr. Roberts' research focuses on characterizing the phenotype of fragile X syndrome, the leading known single-gene cause of autism spectrum disorders. Currently, she is PI on two NIH R01 projects aimed to characterize the emergence of autism spectrum disorder and anxiety in infants and preschool children with fragile X syndrome contrasted to those with non-syndromic autism. Her research employs a prospective developmental approach integrating physiological, behavioral and cognitive dimensions of function within a dynamic systems approach including family factors.

Presentation Abstract (4:30pm presentation)

Biobehavioral Profiles in Infants with Fragile X Syndrome

Increasing attention has focused on core features of the behavioral phenotype in fragile X syndrome with interest on the role of anxiety and autism and their interface across the developmental spectrum. While diagnoses of autism and anxiety typically occur in early to middle childhood, early signs and prodromal features are often present in the first years of life. These early emerging signs represent an opportunity to provide targeted treatment to prevent or reduce the severity of these disorders. Anxiety and autism are complex disorders, however, with overlapping features that are often subtle or absent in early childhood. Thus, studies that integrate multiple facets of these disorders using both symptom and diagnostic approaches monitored over time are essential particularly during the first years of life when multiple rapid developmental changes occur. This talk will describe the developmental trajectory of anxiety and autism in infants and preschoolers with fragile X syndrome contrasted to a sample with non-syndromic autism representing genetic, neural, and behavioral data. Discussion will focus on the impact of these findings to refine the early phenotype of fragile X syndrome and to facilitate early identification and treatment.