



Newsletter – April 25, 2020

What a difference a few short weeks make. Our world has been turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic since our last newsletter was published. Given the daily barrage of information we are all receiving, I'll keep this brief and to the point.

PLEASE JOIN US !!

Virtual PONDA meeting

Friday, May 8th, 2020, 2 - 5 pm

Free of charge !!

Registration required

Click [HERE](#) to register

1. Virtual Assessment of Cognition and ASD

Todd Cunningham, Psychologist

Melanie Penner, Developmental Paediatrician

2. Mental Health of Adults with IDD during COVID

Liz Grier, Family Physician

Anupam Thakur, Psychiatrist

3. Mental Health of Students and Parents

Susan Ball, Psychologist

Brenda Agnew, Parent & School Board Trustee

What's New

Virtual Developmental Assessments

Clinicians are trying to figure out how to do a virtual assessment for children with delays and red flags for ASD. There is much interest in piloting a new tool, ASD-Peds, that has been modelled on the ADOS and is in field trials at

Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. A free webinar can be obtained through the university [website](#) (registration required), and all their tools are being made available for others to use.

Help us start an OMA Medical Interest Group !

Liz Grier got support from attendees at the PONDA dinner meeting on Nov 22 to apply for an [OMA Medical Interest Group](#) on **neurodevelopmental disorders**: Why?

- We don't want the government to miss our population when they define complexity
- To facilitate networking of physicians who care for individuals with NDD across the lifespan
- Act as a resource for broader OMA initiatives that are relevant to our patients

We need at least 50 signatures to start.

Please click [HERE](#) to sign up for the group

Special Education

With school aged students all working from home and the education system learning how to deliver instruction remotely, a massive experiment is underway. The Minister of Education, Stephen Lecce, has been very receptive to recommendations on how to support the special needs student population. Please see our submission to the minister [here](#) through the Minister's Advisory Committee on Special Education (MACSE). Any members who have ideas on how supports could be improved for any students with special education needs, please contact Nicky Jones-Stokreef with your comments. Nicolajs005@me.com We are also looking for regular input into special education. Please fill in the MACSE looking for feedback [form](#) and submit to the email address above.

Student Mental Health Ontario

The mental health needs of students and families is an area of

significant concern, especially given the COVID crisis. Student Mental Health Ontario has quietly been developing a well thought out, tiered approach to addressing these needs over the past several years. Physicians and psychologists need to know there is an expanding resource in mental health available through local schools. Please have a look at their [resources](#).

Autism

The deadline for application to MCCSS for one-time funding for children with a diagnosis of ASD has been extended indefinitely. The funding is to be used to obtain services that are privately funded under the new Ontario Autism Program. Applications can be made here. The amount available is \$20,000 for children 5 years old and under, \$5,000 for children 6 to 18 years old.

Updates from Working Groups

Needs Assessment Tool

Given that many conversations are happening around funding through needs-based assessments, PONDA has formed a small working group to inform this conversation. This group has started to discuss and identify those elements that would be important to capture when completing a needs assessment. Examples of such elements may include: context (e.g. home environment), impact on participation, current supportive measures in place and gap, barriers in addressing needs, and areas of unmet needs and possible support.

Learning Disabilities

The OHRC report is expected at the end of 2020. In anticipation of this, an alliance of advocacy groups has been meeting to plan our approach to urging the government to implement the recommendations. This alliance includes the International Dyslexia Association Ontario branch, Decoding Dyslexia Ontario, Dyslexia Canada, Dr. Todd Cunningham, PONDA and LDAO.

A new webinar series on Dyslexia/Language based LD has started. It is a collaboration between ONBIDA and Microsoft Canada. The first webinar has been archived and is available [here](#).

New Media

We present our latest podcast produced by Dr. Jacqueline Ogilvie who chats with Dr. Olaf Kraus de Camargo and Dr. Mohammad Zubairi, two Developmental Paediatricians from Hamilton, Ontario and the Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre. They discuss the **role physicians play in supporting families on decisions about accessing services for their children with neurodevelopmental disabilities**. This applies especially to those with ASD who now have to buy services with their childhood budget which is provided by the Ontario Autism Program. <https://ponda.ca/podcasts/>

Membership

Membership is open to all physicians and psychologists with an interest in improving the well-being of individuals with neurodevelopmental needs across the lifespan. Membership is informal with no fee. We simply add you to our mailing list if you are interested. Feel free to share our newsletter and advocacy tools. ***The more members, the stronger our voice.***

Please email pondanetwork@icloud.com if you are interested in joining.

Get Involved

Want to learn more about advocacy or to get involved?

Here are some ideas:

- Join one of our working groups:
 - Improving Health Care Capacity for Adults with Neuro. Dev. Disorders

- New media (podcasts)
- Literacy based learning disabilities/dyslexia
- Attend an OMA workshop to improve your advocacy skills advocacy@oma.org
- Meet with your local MPP, and voice your opinion on an important issue
- Write an Op Ed and submit to your favourite print media
- Send a message to Queen's Park through twitter #onpoli
- Use the Advocacy Toolkit on our website to learn how to approach your local school board and encourage evidence-based intervention for LDs
- Listen to our podcasts
- Write to the Ontario Human Rights Commission expressing your concerns about reading instruction in Ontario for the #RightToRead inquiry

Steering Committee:

Alvin Loh, Ben Klein, Elizabeth Grier, Jennifer McLean, Mohammad Zubairi, Nicola Jones-Stokreef, Olaf Kraus de Camargo, Paige Church, Pam Frid, Ronit Mesterman,

MISSION: PONDA is a volunteer network of physicians and psychologists advocating to optimize the well-being of individuals with neurodevelopmental needs in Ontario by promoting evidence informed policy in the systems of care.