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WHAT IS THE INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES PARTICIPANT REGISTRY?

The University of Alabama's IDPR (AKA "The registry") is a database of families and individuals with intellectual disability who are interested in participating in behavioral research studies. We match families and individuals of all ages to appropriate studies to facilitate research on intellectual disability. The registry currently covers Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and Florida. Call us at 205-348-4253 or email cooks002@ua.edu for more information.

NOTE FROM THE REGISTRY COORDINATOR

Dear registry families,

Happy New Year! We are excited about the research opportunities that we have coming up in 2019, some of which are included in this installment of the newsletter. If you or your family would be interested in participating in any of these studies or if you would like more information, please let us know. Also if you know of anyone who you think might be interested in joining the registry please have them contact us, new families are always needed in order to complete this important research.

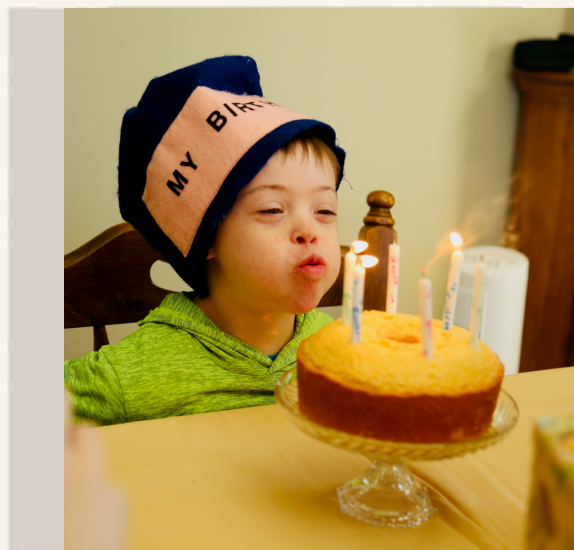
Many of you participated in a study conducted by Jenna Reardanz, the results of her study are provided in this edition of the newsletter. The registry makes a deliberate effort to give you the findings from studies that registry families participate in!

We also have a special interview with Kristina Baggett, a new graduate student in the Connors Lab.

All of this in the Winter 2019 newsletter!

Eric

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SPOTLIGHT ON Silas McFarland!

Silas McFarland just turned 6 years old and attends Kindergarten at Pike Road Elementary. Silas has earned his blue dragon belt at Docarmo's Taekwondo Center and also loves to play, read, and sing with his brothers and sister. He is looking forward to swimming this summer at his Mamaw and Papaw's house where he learned to swim last summer. Silas got a bike for his birthday this year and his parent are anxious for him to learn to ride when the weather gets warmer!

WHATS INSIDE

- Results from a registry involved study- [pg. 2](#)
- Information on current and upcoming studies looking for participants- [pg. 3](#)
- Interview with Kristina Baggett- [pg. 5](#)

Victimization in Adolescents with Down Syndrome: The Impact of Communication and Emotion Regulation

Much of the research with individuals with Down syndrome has focused on cognitive and medical topics. Whereas this research is definitely very important, social experiences have been largely ignored. This project was done in order to start adding to our knowledge about peer relationships in those with Down syndrome. We suspect that common struggles of those with Down syndrome, like communication, could make those with Down syndrome more vulnerable to being victimized. In other words, we thought that communication struggles could increase the chance that someone with Down syndrome is bullied. To test this we asked both parents and children to complete questions and tasks about their communication ability and experiences with peers.

Jenna tested 23 adolescents with Down syndrome (a HUGE thank you to all who participated!) to investigate this question. The findings from this study begin to suggest that communication ability is related fairly strongly to how much someone is victimized. This finding applies to intelligibility (how understandable speech is) and pragmatic ability (how much someone follows social rules).

It is important to remember that these findings are very preliminary and quite a bit more research needs to be done in order to verify and fully understand these findings! However, from this research we have started new research projects to better understand how kids with Down syndrome get along with their peers. In the future, we hope to be able to use the findings from this study along with findings from other studies to help support inclusive and positive peer relations. From this study Jenna was able to earn her Master's degree in Developmental Psychology!

Take Home Tips for Parents

1. Kids with Down syndrome may be more vulnerable to bullying.
2. Helping your child understand social rules could help this.
3. Be sure to talk with your child and their teachers in case any bullying is happening!



CURRENT REGISTRY-SUPPORTED STUDIES:**Well-being and the Social Experiences of Adolescents with Down Syndrome**
Jenna Reardanz, Dr. Fran Connors, and Dr. Kristina McDonald

Research shows that children and adolescents with intellectual disability are at a higher risk to experience peer victimization compared to their typically developing peers. This study develops measures for this population that will be used in future research on the possible consequences of peer victimization, such as anxiety, depression, acting out, etc. The information learned in this study will be used to obtain federal funding for a larger study. The study focuses on adolescents with Down syndrome age 11-18 years.

Route-learning Study
Dr. Ed Merrill

This study is being conducted by Dr. Ed Merrill at the University of Alabama and is designed to look at how individuals learn to navigate through an environment, a skill known as wayfinding. Past research has shown that wayfinding is difficult for individuals with intellectual disability. This study will help researchers understand how wayfinding knowledge develops with the long-term goal of developing ways of training individuals with difficulty in this area. Recruiting individuals with intellectual disability between the ages of 12-29.

Signs of Cognitive Change in Young Adults and Adolescents
Dr. Fran Connors

This study is being conducted by Dr. Fran Connors as a pilot study for a potential grant-funded study in the future. One characteristic of Down syndrome is accelerated aging, which can include declines in memory and other cognitive skills, and another is heightened risk for Alzheimer's Dementia. In this study, we are trying to identify very early signs of declining cognitive skills in people with Down syndrome, as well as signs of improving skills. Identifying these signs could lead to future treatments that could slow the decline. This study is currently recruiting individuals with intellectual disability, with and without Down syndrome ages 16-29.

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ANY OF THESE STUDIES OR WOULD LIKE
MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT THE REGISTRY COORDINATOR AT
COOKS002@UA.EDU OR AT 205-348-4253.**

UPCOMING STUDIES:**The Approximate Number System in Children with Down syndrome****Kristina Baggett**

Recent research has begun to examine the most basic number skills in children with Down syndrome (DS). Several studies suggest that NON-SYMBOLIC number skills are preserved in children with DS, but deficits are found relative to typically developing children when it comes to SYMBOLIC number skills. For her master's thesis, Kristina Baggett is proposing a study under the supervision of Dr. Fran Connors to examine the development of both symbolic and non-symbolic number skills in children with DS. Identifying potential differences between children with DS and their typically developing peers could lead to future interventions to improve these skills. This study, which is scheduled to begin fall 2019, will be recruiting children with DS ages 9-16.

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Welcome Kristina Baggett to the Conners Lab!

Hello everyone! My name is Kristina Baggett and I began as a new graduate student in the Conners Lab during the Fall 2018 semester. I graduated from Ouachita Baptist University in Arkansas with a B.A. in Psychology and Mathematics. My research interests include the cognitive development of children with intellectual or developmental disability. This semester I am working towards proposing my Master's thesis, and I am planning to focus on the development of numerical skills in children with Down syndrome. I am interested in finding out how children with Down syndrome develop their numerical skills with the hope this will lead to ideas of how to increase these skills. Currently I am working with Dr. Conners on the Cognitive Change study, I am excited to be a part of the lab and to have a chance to work with individuals with intellectual disability and their families. In my free time I enjoy spending time with my husband and playing with my two cats.

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PROMOTING RESEARCH ON INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

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GET INVOLVED!!

If you would like your
group's event to be
listed in our future
newsletter, please let us
know.

*Sincere thanks to everyone who is
helping the Registry to promote
research on intellectual disability!*

