



# Research Bulletin

Published by St. Amant Research Centre

St. Amant

January 2011

[stamantresearch.ca](http://stamantresearch.ca)

## A new St. Amant conference

St. Amant's annual conference has a new date, a new location, and even a new name! The Canadian Conference on Developmental Disabilities and Autism will take place on May 18 & 19, 2011, at the Fort Garry Hotel, Spa and Conference Centre in Winnipeg.

As always, the conference will focus on informing, educating, and inspiring people from diverse fields who work to improve the lives of persons with developmental disabilities and autism. This year's speakers will include Dr. David Celiberti, Derrick

Dufresne, Theresa Broda, and Paul Huschilt. Presentation streams will include Research, Ethics, Practical Application, Healthy Living, and more.

St. Amant Research Centre will be represented by Dr. Bev Temple, Dr. Shahin Shooshtari, and our newest team member Dr. Javier Virués-Ortega.

A new website with complete conference details will be launched within the next few weeks. Be sure to check [www.stamant.mb.ca](http://www.stamant.mb.ca) for updates. We look forward to seeing you there.

## Sharing knowledge, building a community

On Tuesday, January 25 (1200h-1300h EST), Dr. Beverley Temple will present via teleconference to members of the Canadian Association for Research and Education in Intellectual Disabilities (CARE-ID).

Bev's topic will be Knowledge Translation in Intellectual Disability. It may sound abstract, but knowledge translation (KT) addresses an urgent practical question: how can caregivers and researchers work together more effectively to put sound knowledge into practice? Bev will introduce the KT concept, including the model used by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. She'll also describe the types of KT research

undertaken at St. Amant Research Centre, from surveying knowledge needs to understanding organizational contexts for KT. Based on these and other studies, Bev will summarize some of the key factors that must be addressed to promote successful KT among stakeholders.

If you'd like to attend the presentation but you're not a CARE-ID member, this is a good opportunity to join. CARE-ID, or Association canadienne pour la recherche et l'enseignement en déficience intellectuelle (ACREDI) was established in 2004 by stakeholders from across Canada to foster a well-connected community of individuals and organizations who seek to promote the interests of the intellectually-disabled population through research and education. Family members, students, front line workers, researchers, and physicians are all welcome as members.

For more information about CARE-ID, including how to join and how to participate in teleconferences, please visit [www.care-id.com](http://www.care-id.com).



*St. Amant Researcher Dr. Bev Temple is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Manitoba*

# Teaching communication skills to children with autism

A teaching procedure developed at St. Amant Research Centre can be used to improve communication skills in children with autism. The procedure was designed and evaluated by University of Manitoba PhD student Carole Marion, who used Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) principles to teach children to request information from people around them.

Communication skills are a fundamental deficit for individuals with autism, a neuro-developmental disorder that occurs in approximately 0.1% to 0.15% of children aged 1 through 14 in Manitoba; the overall prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorders is even higher. Developing verbal ability is therefore an important teaching goal in the St. Amant ABA Program for Children with Autism, where Carole also works as an ABA Consultant.

In her project, Carole worked intensively with five children to teach them the information requests, What is it?, Where?, and/or Which? In one experiment, for example, a child played at a preferred activity for which an important item (e.g. a toy car) was hidden away. The child would begin searching and was prompted to

*Carole Marion, M.A.,  
C. Psych Candidate,  
recently defended her PhD  
dissertation in Psychology  
at the University of  
Manitoba.*



ask, "Where car?" Carole told the child the location of the car so that play could resume. The prompting was then carefully removed over many teaching sessions until the child asked the question independently.

An important feature of Carole's results was that after sufficient teaching sessions, all five participants could generalize their new requests to novel situations, activities, and to their normal home environments. The new skills were also maintained over time.

Beyond the direct benefits to participants, Carole's findings have the potential to improve the service provided by the St. Amant ABA Program, and add to the growing body of knowledge about using Applied Behaviour Analysis to improve language skills in children with autism.

**St. Amant Research Centre** is dedicated to improving the quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities through research and education.

We acknowledge the generous support of:

- The Winnipeg Foundation
- St. Amant Foundation
- University of Manitoba faculties of Nursing, Human Ecology, and Arts.

## Contact Information

Dr. C.T. Yu, Director ([yu@stamant.mb.ca](mailto:yu@stamant.mb.ca)); Dr. Bev Temple ([btemple@stamant.mb.ca](mailto:btemple@stamant.mb.ca)), Dr. Shahin Shooshtari ([sshooshtari@stamant.mb.ca](mailto:sshooshtari@stamant.mb.ca)), Dr. Javier Virues-Ortega ([javier\\_virues@umanitoba.ca](mailto:javier_virues@umanitoba.ca))

Manager: Dr. Toby Martin ([tmartin@stamant.mb.ca](mailto:tmartin@stamant.mb.ca)); Support Officer: Lisa Zhang ([lizhang@stamant.mb.ca](mailto:lizhang@stamant.mb.ca))

To discuss partnerships, please contact St. Amant President Dr. Carl Stephens, Ph. (204) 258-7040

St. Amant Research Centre: 440 River Road, Winnipeg MB R2M 3Z9, Ph. (204) 256-4301; [www.stamantresearch.ca](http://www.stamantresearch.ca)