



Indo-Canadian Autism Network International Symposium



Addressing Challenges and Creating Opportunities



March 1-3, 2023 • Hyderabad, India

About I-CAN 2023



THE INDO-CANADIAN AUTISM NETWORK (I-CAN) is an international volunteer network that links Canadian expertise with Indian clinicians and researchers in autism and related disorders. I-CAN's primary goal is to provide participating centers in India and Canada with a platform for sharing and exchanging knowledge and experience.

I-CAN is hosting a 3-day event from 1st March to 3rd March 2023, at Hyderabad, India, with dual aims of continuing building capacity through training and education, and exploring opportunities for further international collaboration to improve the quality of life of autistic children, adolescents and adults, and their families in India.

I-CAN 2023 will deliver 2 days of intensive clinical training workshops, panel discussions, and keynotes focusing on member identified priority areas. Further, the I-CAN conference will present an opportunity for the delegates to increase active networking of clinicians and researchers within India and tap on resources developed in different I-CAN sites. This will be followed by a day-long roundtable meeting for the I-CAN Leads to brainstorm key components for moving forward with the mission of the Indo-Canadian Autism Network.

ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM

The symposium will be held in 2 parts:

Part 1 will be a set of 2-day training workshops. This will be open to I-CAN Leads from Canada and India as well as 3 delegates from each I-CAN India site.

Keynote address, invited speakers and workshops on Day 1 will provide advances tools, approaches and strategies to clinicians and researchers working in the field of autism and its related disorders in the following areas:

- Transitional aged youth with autism and developmental disorders.
- Advanced training in complex cases and its management
- ADOS and reliability training exercises
- Challenging behavior and adaptive skills
- Social ABCs

Day 2 will introduce important and relevant topics related to problems in autistic adolescents and adults in the following areas:

- Alternative and augmentative communication options
- Adolescents and adult community living
- Sexual health, abuse prevention and sexual identity in autism and related disorders
- Indigenous approaches to autism and their relevance in the Indian context i.e. homeopathy, ayurveda and yoga.
- Mental health approaches and its need for children and parents/caregivers of families with autism

Three workshops running concurrently each day, led by Indian and Canadian leads in specific areas.

- Each workshop will accommodate up to 18 trainees.
- 20 Canadian and Indian Leads and 36 trainees from the I-CAN Sites

Part 2 will be a roundtable brainstorming and planning session of 2023-24, with Canadian and Indian I-CAN leads.

- 15 Indian participants and 7 Canadian participants

The I-CAN India sites will have the opportunity to receive basic and advanced training in tools, strategies, and approaches on topics relevant to their work; knowledge sharing among the India sites to introduce new and advanced approaches; and Continuing support and follow up with CEPs and mentoring.

This event is hosted and sponsored by Divi's Foundation for Gifted Children (DFGC). We also thank the Royal College International's International Development, Aid and Collaboration Program and Community Living Toronto for their support.

The event is open to I-CAN partners in Canada and India and staff of current Indian member agencies of I-CAN. Through the generosity of DFGC, this event is provided at no cost to attendees. In addition, eligible attendees will receive an honorarium to support local travel and lodging expenses.



THE TEAM

MEETING ORGANIZING CO-CHAIR

- Dr S S Meera

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

- Dr Vikram Dua
- Dr Nandita de Souza

INVITED SPEAKERS AND PANELISTS

- Ms Tina Gandhi
- Dr Sheffali Gulati
- Dr Ashok Mysore
- Dr John Vijay Sagar

PROGRAM AND SCIENTIFIC ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

- Dr Vikram Dua
- Dr Dan Goldowich
- Dr S S Meera
- Dr John Vijay Sagar
- Ms.Nisha M Printer
- Mr. Andre Velho
- Ms. Nilima Divi
- Ms. Shirisha D

CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT

- I-CAN Hub

SPECIAL THANKS

- Ms Nilima Divi, Managing Trustee, DFGC
- Dr Kishore Mulpuri
- Dr Pramod G, Managing Director, Fernandez Foundation
- Ms Sirisha D, Management Executive, DFGC
- Ms Malavi Srikar, Ms Divya Swaminathan, and Ms Reny Raju – NIMHANS
- Ms Priyanka Musulay - FCDC
- Brand and Communication Team, Fernandez Foundation
- IT Team, Fernandez Foundation

REGISTRATION AND HONORARIUMS

- Registration for the 2-day educational event (plenaries and workshop) is free of cost to I-CAN member agencies.
- With the generosity of the DFGC, honorarium support is provided for eligible attendees to support individual local expenses.



LOCATION AND HOTEL

- I-CAN 2023 will be held at Hotel Avasa, Hyderabad, India.
- <https://goo.gl/maps/zrT63y8xE6PnkJ4b8>

INTENSIVE TRAINING WORKSHOPS

- I-CAN 2023 will provide 6 concurrent training workshops, each led by one of our Indian and Canadian faculty. Training workshops will emphasize practical applications that can be readily implemented with clinical and research activities of the agency.
- I-CAN leads will identify team members who will not only utilize, but also share the learnings with their teams and support adoption of practices.

POST-SYMPOSIUM NETWORK SITE VISITS

I-CAN faculty will participate in individual visits and consultations at network sites before and after the Hyderabad symposium:

- Fernandez Child Development Center, Hyderabad
- Center for Child Development and Disabilities, Bangalore
- Ummeed, Mumbai
- Lathika Roy Foundation, Dehradun
- St John's Medical College Hospital, Bangalore

SYMPOSIUM AGENDA

March 1st, Wednesday Morning Session

- 9:00 AM

Welcome Address

- 9:30 AM

Keynote Address | Dr Vikram Dua

Progression or Regression in the Transition Years: Trajectories of Youth with Developmental Disabilities

The years roughly spanning the end of puberty through to the mid-20s represent a period of both promise and peril, as children evolve into their adult selves, the culmination and consolidation of all that has come before. In this second separation-individuation of life, individual long-term trajectories are often cast, and adult outcomes and quality of life are fixed. For those with autism or IDD and their families, the enormous obstacles and huge craters in their pathway forward are being seen in relief view.

This talk will outline some of the unique aspects of the transitional years for youth with developmental disabilities (DD). It will survey what we know about the social and community participation of adults with autism and IDD, examine attitudes and expectations of adulthood, and explore modifiable mediators to better outcome. Throughout, the relevance to the Indian context is emphasized. Participants will be encouraged to consider how their personal experiences are comparable or are dissimilar from the available literature.

- 10:20 AM

Invited Lecture | Tina Gandhi

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

An overview and Introduction of the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Model and its processes for caregivers and families of children with autism. An outline of the 6 main ACT processes, with special focus on exercises and examples that can be utilized with caregivers in group and counseling sessions for families and autistic clients. Identifying key outcomes and value of utilizing the ACT model with caregiver groups. An example of how this model has been adapted to the Indian social and cultural context with examples from Maitriya group.

- 11:00 AM

Tea Break

- 11:15 AM

Complex Case Presentation | Dr Koyeli Sengupta and Dr Dedeepya Puskur

In this session a neurodevelopmentally complex youth will be presented and reviewed. Case presentation will be followed by a facilitated group discussion. The focus will be on diagnostic clarification guiding medication treatment, with emphasis on evidence-based approaches, and highlighting some of the common misassumptions and pitfalls of psychopharmacology.

- 12:30 PM

Lunch Break

SYMPOSIUM AGENDA

March 1st, Wednesday Afternoon Session

- 01:30 PM – 4:45 PM

Concurrent Workshops

Workshop 1 | Ms Kavita Kamat

Addressing challenging behaviors and teaching adaptive skills

Challenging behaviors often interfere with learning, create barriers to social inclusion and reduce the overall quality of life for the child/adult and their family. Understanding the science behind how children learn and why they engage in challenging behaviors will enable parents and educators to intervene early to create healthy behavior patterns. Early intervention and focus on teaching relevant skills can significantly prevent challenging behaviors. The session will discuss the importance of early intervention, and outline strategies to engage and educate parents in the assessment, implementation, and monitoring of a behavior plan. Using case examples, we will review simple and effective data collection methods to measure impact and make necessary changes and adjustments to the plan when needed. Lastly, we will discuss how we can increase our capacity to support families and children effectively. The LRF team will discuss their capacity-building experience in this area and its impact on current and future practice.

Workshop 2 | Sethu & Bloorview

Social ABCs

The Social ABCs is a care-giver mediated early intervention NDBI for toddlers showing social-communication challenges that may be signs of autism. This workshop is ideal for professionals who are keen in establishing or strengthening evidence-based early intervention autism services in their organization. The workshop will include a virtual keynote presentation by Dr. Jessica Brian, offering an overview of the Social ABCs, the value of intervening at the very first signs of social-communication delays, and the research that has led to the Social ABCs becoming a publicly available, government funded program in several Canadian provinces. Mr. Andre Velho and Ms. Mahera Kantawalla have partnered with the Canadian Social ABCs expert team for over 2 years to deliver the program at Sethu and to train local service providers in India. Using an Indian service-delivery lens, they will share their own training journey to help professionals and organizations understand the process, feasibility, and benefits of offering the Social ABCs at their site. Attendees will get an inside look at how Social ABCs is different from the other NDBIs, how Sethu uses the Social ABCs to empower families to support their children's early social communication development, and the overall success of the program in Goa and feedback from their families.

Workshop 3 | Dr Nidhi Singhal and Dr Vikram Dua

ADOS (focus on adults & adolescents)

Increasingly, many of us are being approached by individuals with fluent speech, who seem to have 'lower support needs. Individuals who may have lived their entire life feeling 'different' but unable to identify or explain the reasons. It is not unusual for autistic people to have reached adulthood without a diagnosis. Oftentimes, a query about autism comes because the person may have read or seen something about autism that makes them think 'that sounds like me'. Other times, it follows the diagnosis of autism of their child or that of another relative. Autism presents very differently in children, youngsters, and adults, in men and in women. Many adults have learned to live and even hide their symptoms over the years and often, the presence of comorbidities such as anxiety, OCD and ADHD adds to the confusion.

Through live demonstration and consensus coding exercises, the workshop will focus on upgrading skills in the clinical use of ADOS with adolescents and adults. Primarily designed for those with prior training in ADOS, this workshop will focus on the practical challenges experienced in administration, and clarification of concepts and constructs in ADOS coding.

- 04:45 PM

Feedback Session | Mr Andre Velho

SYMPOSIUM AGENDA

March 2nd, Thursday Morning Session

- 09:00 AM - 12:15 PM

Concurrent Workshops

Workshop 1 | Ms Megan Wilcott

Functional Assessment and Family and Person-Centered Treatment Planning

As an introduction, we will cover effective components of interventions, tools to identify evidence-based and emerging practices, and discuss the user case for several approaches, including group, 1:1, parent coaching, telehealth, and focused and comprehensive service delivery models. An overview of functional assessment and curricular assessment tools will be provided. Participants will review information related to person-centered planning and goal setting. Participants will then work in small groups and be guided to conduct a functional assessment procedure using videos, documentation, and assessment tools, to establish an initial treatment plan.

Workshop 2 | Dr S S Meera and the LiL' team, NIMHANS

Everyone Communicates! Demystifying Augmentative and Alternative Communications

This workshop on augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) will cover different means by which an autistic child can communicate besides speaking. Participants will learn about different types of AAC in terms of un-aided (e.g., gestures, facial expressions), aided AAC including low-tech (e.g., symbols, picture boards) and high-tech options (e.g., using a picture/text-based communication app, eye tracking). The workshop will include AAC candidacy assessment as these are tailor made to fit everyone's needs and abilities. There will also be a demonstration of use of some AAC devices like eye tracking in a practical clinical scenario. The participants will be divided into smaller working groups to learn to evaluate AAC candidacy, create high and/or low tech AAC templates and simulate a conversation based on the templates created.

Workshop 3 | Mr Brad Saunders & Ms Deanna Strazzella

Retention and Quality Improvement in Autism Services, and Organisational and Programme Design Perspectives

Community Living Toronto will speak about who we are as an organization and will emphasize the importance and benefit of community being at the core of every service we provide. We will briefly touch on our history and learnings in supporting individuals with autism and complex needs and review systems that have been developed to support successful transitions of complex children into adult services. Through our experiences in providing complex autism-based supports, we have learned that the greatest challenge we have faced is in attracting and retaining skilled, qualified, and motivated staff. Therefore, the primary focus of this workshop will be to address practical applications for increasing staff retention in complex settings at both the organizational and program level. We will conclude with a comprehensive review of case examples from our Specialized Resource Homes. Case reviews will explore the use of Behavioural Analytic programs within a biopsychosocial framework.

- 12:15 PM

Lunch Break

SYMPOSIUM AGENDA

March 2nd, Thursday
Afternoon Session

• 01:15 PM

Complex Case Presentation | Dr Kirthika Rajaraman and Dr Vikram Dua

In this session, a neurodevelopmentally complex youth will be presented and reviewed. Case presentation will be followed by a facilitated group discussion. The focus will be on diagnostic clarification guiding medication treatment, with emphasis on evidence-based approaches, and highlighting some of the common misassumptions and pitfalls of psychopharmacology.

• 02:30 PM

Panel Discussion | Dr John Vijay Sagar, Dr Ashok Mysore and Dr Sheffali Gulati

Moderator | Dr Nandita de Souza

Alternative Treatments, Advanced Investigations, Neurological Treatments

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) includes all such practices and ideas which are outside the domain of conventional medicine in several countries and defined by its users as preventing or treating illness or promoting health and wellbeing. CAM therapies are commonly used by parents for their children diagnosed with ASD. Parents chose CAM therapies as either add-on or primary therapy. One of the common misconceptions about CAM therapies is the understanding that CAM therapies are natural and do not have any adverse effects. Most parents do not disclose the use of CAM therapies to the clinicians and most clinicians do not enquire about the use of CAM therapies. This panel discussion will provide a brief overview of the common CAM therapies used for children diagnosed with ASD and will discuss the approach to be taken by clinicians to address the issue of CAM therapies.

Neurological interventions: namely, medical interventions that can help improve autism outcomes. Three to Four well known dampeners of outcome include Epilepsy, Tic disorders, sleep disorders and Disruptive behaviors. All these needs medical management, often. However, a new set of trials have been focusing on the syndrome altering role in ASD. The presentation will highlight these growing options including drugs and brain stimulation. Personal experiences will be shared and key summary views on evolving options highlighted.

Apart from the routine diagnostic evaluation for children with Autism, there has been a constant need to enhance the capability of diagnosis by integrating clinicians' experience (mainly qualitative knowledge), with quantitative measurements, using advanced diagnostics. A few semi-automatic qualitative methods to support the clinical diagnosis allowing for feature extraction and perceptual analysis with non-invasive marker-less technique have been tried by few researchers.

Several studies have shown that most people with autism show a natural affinity for technology and a good disposition for using technology and learning using computers. This is because the environment and context that these experiences provide are predictable and structured, which helps people with ASD to maintain their routines and repetitive behaviors without affecting their comfort.

• 03:30 PM

Tea Break

• **03:45 PM**

Keynote Address | Dr Nandita de Souza

Sexuality, Adolescence and Autism – A Challenge Threesome

The teenage years are difficult to navigate even in the best of circumstances. The turbulent emergence of a teen's sexual self can overwhelm their parents. For autistic adolescents and their caregivers, the situation becomes more challenging. Autistic people have the same human needs for intimacy and relationships as the rest of us. However, they require additional support to explore and express their sexuality in a socially appropriate way. Due to difficulties in social understanding and communication, they are at particular risk for sexual abuse.

Using case examples, the lecture will address sexuality development and needs in teenagers with autism and highlight appropriate strategies to foster their healthy sexual development.

• **04:45 PM**

Feedback Session | Mr Andre Velho

• **05:00 PM**

Wrap up | Dr Vikram Dua & Ms Nisha Printer

SPEAKER BIOS

Dr Vikram Dua

<https://www.ican-autism.org/member/single/TEAM19606>

Ms Tina Gandhi

<https://www.ican-autism.org/member/single/TEAM19613>

Dr Koyeli Sengupta

<https://www.ican-autism.org/member/single/TEAM19599>

Dr Dedeepya Puskur

<https://www.ican-autism.org/member/single/TEAM19596>

Ms Kavita Kamat

<https://www.ican-autism.org/member/single/TEAM19612>

Dr Jessica Brian

<https://www.ican-autism.org/member/single/TEAM19609>

Dr Nidhi Singhal

<https://www.ican-autism.org/member/single/TEAM19602>

Dr Nandita de Souza

<https://www.ican-autism.org/member/single/TEAM19601>

Dr S S Meera

<https://www.ican-autism.org/member/single/TEAM19604>

Mr Brad Saunders

<https://www.ican-autism.org/member/single/TEAM19647>

Dr John Vijay Sagar

<https://www.ican-autism.org/member/single/TEAM19598>

Dr Ashok Mysore

<https://www.ican-autism.org/member/single/TEAM19614>

Dr Sheffali Gulati

<https://www.ican-autism.org/member/single/TEAM19603>

Ms Nisha Mascarenhas Printer

<https://www.ican-autism.org/member/single/TEAM19617>

Dr Dan Goldowitz

<https://www.ican-autism.org/member/single/TEAM19608>

Sethu Team

Mr Andre Velho has been an Autism Intervention Therapist at Sethu since 2013 and coordinates Sethu's autism services, training, advocacy initiatives and research projects. His team has introduced much evidence-based programs in their organization, with a focus on naturalistic interventions, family centered care and neurodiversity affirming practices.

Ms Mahera Kantawalla is an Occupational Therapist with over a decade of clinical experience. She has been trained in Sensory Integration and is certified in Neurodevelopmental Treatment. Mahera has been leading Sethu OT services since 2014, supporting children with autism and other developmental conditions, working to improve their social, communication and functional skills. She trains caregivers, teachers and professionals, coordinates advocacy activities and engages in regular research.

LiL' Team

Divya Swaminathan is a speech-language pathologist and audiologist by clinical training and is currently a Ph.D. Scholar at the department of speech pathology and audiology, NIMHANS, Bangalore. Prior to joining NIMHANS, Divya worked at the St. John's National Academy of Health Sciences, Bangalore for 3 years. She worked on developing an early screening tool for autism. Divya is trained in Play therapy and Oral Placement Therapy (OPT Level 1). She is passionate about working in early identification of, and early intervention in children with autism and related neurodevelopmental disorders. Divya's current area of research focuses on the early home language environment and its impact on the development of early communication and language skills in infant-toddlers.

Malavi Srikar is a speech-language pathologist by clinical training with extensive experience in tele-intervention. She is a Ph.D. scholar at the department of speech pathology and audiology, NIMHANS, Bangalore. Malavi is enthusiastic about working with cognitive linguistic disorders, autism, and other neuro-developmental disorders. She has been recently awarded the INSAR Virtual Research Internship in Autism and Cultural Diversity where she will be studying the caregiver-infant interaction in infants at high likelihood for autism and neurotypical dyads. Malavi's current area of research focuses on parent-mediated early intervention, delivered online, for infants at high likelihood for autism and related disorders.

Other Speakers

Dr Kirthika Rajaraman is a Developmental Pediatrician at Centre for Child Development and Disabilities (CCDD), Motherhood child developmental centre, Hebbal Bangalore. She did her post-graduation in Institute of Child Health (Madras Medical College) in Chennai & Dip. NB in Bangalore Baptist Hospital. Subsequently she pursued her interest in developmental pediatrics by doing an IAP fellowship in Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics in CCDD, Bangalore. She is trained in Developmentally supportive care in NICU (Development & supportive care foundation for Newborn & children) & completed her training in Prechtl's General movements assessment of newborn & infants (GM trust, Europe). She is trained & certified in administering development assessment tools & Autism Diagnostic tools- BSID, ADOS, ADI-r) and has worked along with a multi-disciplinary team in delivering early intervention. She has done a certified course in Learning disability from Spastic society of Karnataka and worked along with Resource room special educators in designing IEP for children with Learning disabilities & guided them in functional behavior analysis.

Ms Deanna Strazzella (Director, Specialized Services – Community Living Toronto) has 15 years of extensive clinical experience in the Developmental Services sector and has spent the last 10 years with Community Living Toronto. Deanna led the development of Community Living Toronto's Specialized Resource Homes (supported living programs for children and adults with ASD and complex special needs) and has significantly expanded CLTO's Interdisciplinary and clinically based services both internally and in the community. In her role as Director of Specialized Services, Deanna is responsible for the ongoing expansion of CLTO's clinical supports and services, advancing a health and wellness strategy for individuals in service, and introducing opportunities for research partnerships in evidence-based support models. Outside of Community Living Toronto, Deanna spent 8 years teaching in the Behavioural Science and Technology Program at George Brown College in Toronto and has served on the Board of the Ontario Association for Behavioural Analysis (ONTABA).

Ms Megan Wilcott (Chief Clinical Officer) has worked at centres of excellence in services, education, and research for individuals with autism, their families, and communities in Canada and the USA for over 18 years. In 2017 Megan joined the Monarch House team and opened the first Alberta Monarch House centre in Calgary. Megan has been a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst since 2014 and has a Master's in Counseling. Currently completing a PhD in Applied Behavior Analysis and Autism Intervention, Megan's focus is creating flexible and innovative service delivery models aligned with the latest research.

Divi's Foundation for Gifted Children

Divi's Foundation for Gifted Children is a Non-Profit Organisation founded in the year 2015. We operate with a focus on improving the awareness, quality of assessment, and care provided in the field of Autism in India. We believe in being more empathetic as a society towards children on the spectrum. The foundation strives towards developing a safe neuro-diverse community, thereby achieving children's holistic development and inclusiveness in all aspects of their life.

Our Vision: India where all individuals with ASD and their families have access to excellent evidence-based care.

To achieve this, we have:

- Established a Centre of Excellence for Autism care in Hyderabad, India, in collaboration with Fernandez hospitals. The centre offers extensive interwoven therapies like Occupational Therapy, Behavioural Therapy, Speech and Language, Remedial Therapy, Physiotherapy, Yoga for special needs and, Art Therapy.
- DFGC has been ushering subject matter experts from countries around the world to conduct various wholesome workshops that typically extend for a period of one to three days.
- The foundation confers the opportunity to develop networking among Indian Centres, thereby improving the therapeutic approach and care provided.
- Awareness is crucial for growth and preservation. Hence, promoting awareness about autism and its acceptance among medical professionals, schools and society at large, to safeguard and normalise neurodiversity is of utmost focus in DFGC.
- Early diagnosis and intervention play significant roles in imparting major long-term positive effects on a child. Routine monitoring of infantile developmental milestones until the age of 24 months allows better fulfilment of the child's requirements. Such customized aiding therapies ensure enhanced development and help children with ASD express their individuality.

In line with our Vision, through the I-CAN collaboration, DFGC hopes to provide an opportunity for leading experts in the field of autism and neurodevelopmental disorders from both Canada and India to Evaluate, Collaborate and Improve the present status, needs, and opportunities for ASD services and research in India.

We would like to thank the Symposium co-sponsor Royal College International and Community Living Toronto for providing their support to improve autism care in India. We acknowledge the best efforts put in by the faculty to enhance the services provided. We heartily appreciate their endeavour, and the extensive planning required to put this symposium together.

Wishing you all the best!

Ms Nilima Divi

Managing Trustee

Divi's Foundation for Gifted Children



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