

SP24.21. Autism Assessment Capacity Project

Overview

The Autism Assessment Capacity Project (AAP) seeks to train a cadre of 30+ primary care providers such as general pediatricians and family medicine doctors in the Portland Oregon metropolitan region on how to efficiently diagnose autism in young children ages 1-3 years old. Historically, autism has been diagnosed outside of primary care settings -- where many young children are routinely seen for well and sick care -- leading to long wait times (12+ months) for diagnostic services, late diagnosis (after a child turns 3 years old), difficulty accessing early intervention and autism therapy services, and racial/ethnic inequities in autism service access and family cost burden. Several innovative autism primary care provider training initiatives, including the AAP, are trying to remedy these persistent problems. To track and understand AAP outcomes, this project will include a mixed methods evaluation -- specifically evaluation of the provider training component of this initiative. The student intern will work closely with the faculty mentor at NAU, who is co-leading the evaluation with researchers at OHSU, to revise the AAP evaluation plan, develop evaluation data collection tools such as surveys and interview questions to determine provider autism knowledge and skills, and collect evaluation data from the primary care providers who enroll and participate in the provider training program. The AAP provider training program will consist of the following activities: (1) an asynchronous online autism training through the American Academy of Pediatrics; (2) a 2-day didactic, in person training on how to administer the Screening Tool for Autism in Toddlers (STAT) and determine autism diagnosis based on the DSM-V criteria; (3) video based STAT and autism diagnostic training evaluation to ensure high fidelity autism diagnosis in the providers training; and (4) 9+ Extension for Community Health Outcomes (ECHO) Autism sessions. The AAP evaluation will also include gathering patient data from providers' practices and analyzing these data to understand wait-times and number of children reached with the autism assessment services. The intern will also be able to assist with this.

What the Student will DO and Learn

The student will learn the following: (1) what is contained in a program evaluation plan; (2) how to develop a survey in Qualtrics; (3) how to develop semi-structured interview questions; (4) how to summarize survey and interview data; (5) how primary care providers are being trained to assess autism in young children; and (6) how to report evaluation findings to different audiences. Relatedly, the student will be involved with finalizing the evaluation plan (expected February 2024), developing a survey for primary care providers in Qualtrics, helping to administer the survey and sending survey reminders, participating in evaluation team meetings (every other week), tabulating survey using descriptive statistics, and summarizing qualitative interview findings in a narrative fashion with exemplar quotations.

Additional Benefits

The student will have the opportunity to collaborate with faculty at the School of Medicine at Oregon Health & Science University and work with the primary care providers who enroll in the project. The student will be encouraged to present their work on this project at the NAU undergraduate symposium

and national conferences such as Pediatric Academic Societies. The student will be invited to work on any peer-reviewed publications that may be pursued in relationship to this work.

Time Commitment

4.5 hours/week for 15 weeks