New Phase in Genetic Research

The stuttering genetics project being carried out at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) reports that their success in recruiting families has allowed them to enter a new and exciting phase of their research.

After more than two years enrolling families, obtaining DNA samples, and performing speech evaluations on family members, the research is moving into this new phase, where DNA samples are being studied in the laboratory.

The goal of this research is to find markers that are inherited along with stuttering in families. Finding such markers would show the location of the gene or genes which predispose individuals in these families to stuttering. This phase of the research is being carried out as a collaboration between the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders in Bethesda, MD, and the Center for Inherited Disease Research at Johns Hopkins Medical School in Baltimore, some 30 minutes away.

“We should keep in mind that we are doing an experiment here,” said Dr. Dennis Drayna, leader of the NIH Stuttering Genetics Project. “Although we know some stuttering is almost certainly caused by genes, we don’t know how many genes are involved, or how strong the effect of any one gene is. At this stage, we feel confident that we can identify genetic markers for stuttering if it is caused by a single major gene, so we want to begin the laboratory studies now. However, it’s possible that there are many genes involved, each with a more modest contribution to stuttering. In such a case, we may need a very large number of families in our study, which is why we haven’t stopped looking for and enrolling more families with several individuals who stutter.”

Bloodstein Presented with Prestigious Malcolm Fraser Award

MEMPHIS - The 1999 Malcolm Fraser Award, which honors excellence in the field of fluency, has been presented by the Stuttering Foundation of America to Oliver Bloodstein, a speech-language pathologist. Bloodstein is a Professor Emeritus of Speech at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York and has served on the school's faculty for almost 50 years. Bloodstein received a plaque and the $2,000 award at the Sixth Annual Leadership Conference of ASHA's Division 4: Fluency and Fluency Disorders in San Diego on June 5, 1999.

Said Dr. Nan Bernstein Ratner, "Professor Bloodstein has had an indelible effect on my life as a researcher. I would not be in the field today if it were not for his studies in the early 1970's."

In addition to his long career at CUNY's Brooklyn College, Bloodstein has published almost 40 articles and book chapters, and three books—the research works that shaped our modern view of stuttering.

His best-known contribution to the field was a Handbook of Stuttering, first published in 1969 and considered a landmark text. The most recent edition was published in 1995 and Bloodstein's continued updating and publication of this comprehensive, objective, and insightful work has been a significant contribution to our understanding of stuttering.

Mel Tillis in Prime Time

Exciting new public-service announcements for radio feature legendary country music star Mel Tillis.

In the spring of 1999, Tillis contacted SFA with an offer to record PSA's in his own studio and at his own expense. His recorded PSA's are fifteen and thirty seconds long, and they give listeners SFA's toll-free number for help and information.

One version is Mel's voice only, the other version includes a country music background.

Announced SFA president Jane Fraser, "These new PSA's will be sent to 2,442 country music stations all across the nation."

"We are anticipating that an ever-growing number of radio stations will air the PSA," added Fraser. "We feel certain that having Mel Tillis as spokesman will enable SFA to reach a previously untapped audience."
Specialists Workshop Celebrates 13th Year

The Memphis-based Stuttering Foundation of America and Northwestern University hosted their annual instructional workshop for speech-language pathologists specializing in stuttering from July 12 through July 23, 1999.

Each year 20 speech pathologists from around the world with a special interest in stuttering are accepted to participate in the workshop. Under the leadership of Dr. Hugo Gregory, the workshop is organized to focus on therapeutic skills and techniques for intervention with children and adults.

This year’s workshop participants come from the United States, Canada, Croatia, Venezuela, Jordan, Brazil, and Italy.

“We’re gaining new perspectives and are excited to return home with them,” added Suzana Jecsic of Croatia, Abdelrahim Attieh of Jordan, and Luisella Cocco Raison of Italy. Added Jennifer Code of Canada, “I’ve learned a tremendous amount during these two weeks.”

“It was phenomenal.” remarked John Sloane of Baltimore. “I learned a lot, met a lot of great people, and refreshed my enthusiasm for working in stuttering.”

Added Liz Blake, “SFA’s commitment to the field is inspirational.”

Adriana Lourido of Mexico noted, “I have many ideas and new motivation and knowledge as a result of the workshop at Northwestern. It was an experience I will never forget!”

This unique workshop has gained international recognition for its excellence in the post-graduate study of stuttering.

For more information about this intensive workshop which will take place July 10 through 21, 2000, write: Dr. Hugo H. Gregory, SFA, P.O. Box 11749, Memphis, TN 38111-0749, or call the Stuttering Foundation at 1-800-992-9392. Fellowships for the workshop are provided by the Stuttering Foundation.

Genetic Research
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The long-term goal of this research is to identify the actual gene or genes which can predispose individuals to stuttering.

The value of knowing such genes would have an immediate impact on the understanding of the elusive causes of this disorder. For example, it could be that stuttering may come in different forms, or belong to different subtypes, and that different genes could be the underlying cause of this. Knowing which “stuttering gene” an individual was carrying could provide important guidance for intervention and therapy. Although a number of years away, such advances could provide important benefits to individuals who stutter.

The SFA history book is now on the Web with updated information about the Founder, the Board of Directors, public awareness of stuttering, and basic research on stuttering.

Some recent comments include, “I just wanted to say what a relief it was to discover your Web site. I have stuttered for virtually all of my life and I thought that I was the only one around that had this handicap”, said JC.

Readers of Essence, Seventeen, YM, Time, People, and National Geographic are contacting us through the Web site which they found through public service advertisements.
Stuttering Foundation of America
1999 Journalism Award Winners

by Jean Gruss

The Stuttering Foundation of America recently announced its 1999 Awards for Excellence in news reporting. Each winning entry successfully enhanced public understanding of this complex speech disorder.

“We are continually impressed by the attention that journalists now are giving to the causes and treatment of stuttering,” said Jane Fraser, president of the 52-year-old non-profit foundation.

“The entries this past year from print and electronic journalists reflect greater understanding and sensitivity of a speech disorder that affects millions of Americans.”

Six distinguished journalists are honored this year for their outstanding contributions.

Category: Large circulation newspapers
* First Place, Alan Wechsler for “Something to talk about” in the Albany (N.Y.) Times-Union. Wechsler’s compassionate account of one man’s struggle with stuttering showed readers what it’s like to live with the speech disorder. The story is accompanied by a helpful tips box and visually attractive photos.

*Second Place, Chris Burritt for “A way with words” in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Burritt presents the reader with a good mix of anecdotes from people who stutter and helpful information that can help others.

Category: Small circulation newspapers
*First Place, Jimmy Tomlin for “Finding his voice” in the High Point (N.C.) Enterprise. Tomlin describes how one couple helped their son deal with stuttering and how others may benefit from their experience. An accompanying story gives readers insight into one adult’s successful efforts to overcome the speech disorder.

Category: Magazines
*First Place, Daniel Santacruz, “La tartamudez y el bilingüismo” in People en Espanol. Santacruz sheds light on the special challenges that bilingual children face and provides their parents with useful information.


Category: Electronic media
*First Place, Becca King, America’s Health Network. King’s informative television segment with a pediatrician and a speech-language pathologist gave families suggestions of what they can to do help a child who stutters.

Each of the Stuttering Foundation of America’s 1999 first place winners will receive a cash award of $250.

Self-Therapy Available in Lithuania

Vidunas Ramsa, Ph.D., president of the self-help group, “Mikciojimo problemu klubas,” in Vilnius, Lithuania, sent SFA a copy of the recent translation of Self Therapy for the Stutterer into Lithuanian.

The book is entitled Mikciojanciu Saviaterapija. Dr. Ramsa writes, “This translation was sent by the Lithuanian Speech and Language Therapists Association.”

Said SFA’s Fraser, “The book is very attractive; and we now have it on display in our Memphis office for everyone to see and admire!”

New Edition in Korea


This book is an excellent translation and a welcome addition to the SFA’s collection of books in Korean.
1999 School Conference A Success

by Lisa Scott-Trautmann

The historic Broadview Hotel in downtown Wichita, Kansas, was the setting for the SFA annual conference for school clinicians, Stuttering Therapy: Practical Ideas for the School Clinician. Co-sponsored by the Stuttering Foundation of America, Wichita State University, and the Kansas Speech and Hearing Association, the conference was a resounding success. One hundred and ten people attended, representing 13 states and a variety of employment settings including schools, university clinics, and private practice.

"Fantastic!" said Anna Schoen, an enthusiastic participant at the Northwestern Conference held in June. "The cost, information, and presenters were fantastic! Keep up the good work in helping clinicians provide quality speech services to stutterers."

From the Southwest Medical Center in Kansas, Amy Urias and Holly McCarter exclaimed, "We truly learned a great deal of valuable information." They continued, "We will highly recommend this conference to other professionals interested in stuttering."

Participants heard presentations from Peter Ramig, Barry Guitar, Charles Healey, Patricia Zebrowski, Kristin Chemela, and Nina Reardon on topics such as practical strategies for therapy, functional methods for measuring progress, interviewing families/children about stuttering, counseling parents, and dealing effectively with emotions and attitudes.

In addition, lively and interactive discussion groups were led by Ellen Bennett, Richard Forcucci, Pearl Gordon, Ann McKeenan, Barbara Moore-Brown, and Patricia Zebrowski. Lisa Scott Trautman was conference coordinator, assisted by Michele Zimmerman and Holly Myers. Presenters profiled real children who stutter through the use of video segments and examples of child responses, enhancing the explanation of concepts being discussed.

It was reinforcing for many clinicians to have the opportunity to see techniques and ideas being demonstrated, as well as have the opportunity to ask questions of leading experts in the area of childhood stuttering. Additionally, the opportunity to follow up and reinforce concepts in the small group discussion sessions was viewed as a critical component of the conference.

Evaluation comments indicated the unique combination of presenters followed by discussion groups make this conference one of the premier continuing education opportunities available to school-based speech pathologists. The evaluations offered by attendees were consistently positive, including such comments as, "This is an excellent conference all the way around; lots of helpful information for the school clinician" and, "The discussion group was a great opportunity for smaller sets of individuals to interact, ask questions, get feedback, and discuss various treatment options." Another evaluation remarked, "Overall, this conference has been extremely beneficial to me. I learned more information than I could have expected. I was also validated that the techniques I use are O.K. and I feel like a more competent therapist because of it."

Next year's two-day conference for professionals working in school settings will be held in Charleston, South Carolina, and will be co-sponsored by the University of South Carolina.

Attendees continue discussions during luncheons.

Stuttering and Your Child Reaches India

Stuttering and Your Child: Questions and Answers has been translated into Hindi through the hard work of Dr. Sajiv Adlakha Speech & Hearing Clinic in New Delhi, India.

"The book has been circulated among experts who appreciated this first ever attempt to create awareness among the general public at a low cost and in the easy to understand Question-Answer method," said Dr. Adlakha. "The response to the publication of this book has gone way beyond our expectations," he enthusiastically added.

"Reaching parents in this country of 846,302,688 people is a real milestone for the Stuttering Foundation," said Jane Fraser, president of SFA.

For information about how to obtain a copy of the Hindi translation, refer to the last page of this newsletter.
Participants Applaud Five-Day Workshop

The second Stuttering Foundation of America Southeastern Workshop was held June 23-27, 1999, at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. Twenty-two speech pathologists selected from over 160 applicants were selected based largely upon their interest in stuttering and their direct involvement with children who stutter.

Internationally a diverse group, the selected workshop participants are employed in a variety of settings: medical clinics and hospitals, preschools, elementary schools, junior-high and high schools, university clinics, and private practice. As all of the participants lived together in a dorm facility throughout the five days, these speech pathologists had an excellent opportunity to share their experiences in working with children who stutter.

Dr. Susan Dietrich of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Dr. Sheryl Gottwald of the University of New Hampshire directed the workshop and provided the primary instruction. The workshop began Wednesday morning with a discussion of the research bases and theoretical foundation for the development and treatment of stuttering. Wednesday morning Dietrich and Gottwald discussed the assessment and diagnosis of the child who stutters. Most of the workshop time was devoted to practical treatment methods in working with stuttering clients. Dr. Gottwald shared ideas about working with preschoolers and their families. Dr. Dietrich discussed ways to integrate stuttering modification and fluency shaping techniques with children who stutter. Both presenters stressed the importance of transferring speech skills, communication patterns, and positive feelings about speaking to all the areas of the child's life. Videotaped segments and small group practice were used throughout the workshop.

Saturday morning, local children and their parents volunteered their time to enact therapy sessions. Workshop participants had the opportunity to use the newly learned techniques in a role-playing session before returning to their clients who stutter. The workshop faculty was on-hand to provide suggestions. That evening, workshopers gathered at Susan Dietrich's home for a wine and cheese party. Jane Fraser, president of the Stuttering Foundation of America, presented the history of the Stuttering Foundation of America. "I was really touched by her lecture," said Ann Marting of Peachtree City, Georgia.

Dr. E. Charles Healey of the University of Nebraska made a guest appearance on the final morning of the workshop and presented decision-making strategies in working with children who stutter. Said Workshop Director Dietrich, "Charlie Healey does such a nice job of communicating with workshops participants. It was as if he had been with us all week!"

Workshop participants reported enjoying the experience. "The workshop was packed with valuable information. Susan and Sheryl worked hard to improve our skills and lessen our fears regarding disfluent children," said Janice Side of Dauphin, Georgia. Several participants of the workshop mentioned that they appreciated the opportunity to work with children, with the workshop instructors available for feedback.

Elizabeth Sparks of Cordova, Tennessee, said, "The workshop was the best I’ve ever attended." Karen Rizzo of Loveland, Ohio, added, "I am eager to get back to work and use my new skills."

Greensboro community merchants again rallied around the mission of the SFA workshop and donated foods and services throughout the week. Businesses and people contributing their services included: Sam's Club, Rose Harbor, Bruegger Bagels, Happy Rentz, Jane Long, Kinko's, Food Lion, Toys & Co., Animal Quackery, and Discovery Toys.

This workshop, the Diagnosis and Treatment of Children Who Stutter—Practical Strategies, is offered each year through the Stuttering Foundation of America. The location for the workshop alternates between Boston, Massachusetts, and Greensboro, North Carolina. Next summer, on June 20-25, 2000, this workshop will be presented at Boston University. In the summer of 2001, the workshop will return to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. For more information about this exciting workshop, call SFA at 1-800-992-9392.

Sandra Hostler, Joe Fulcher, Lynda Adkins and Renita Shields.

Karen Rizzo and Sofya Bordovskya take a break from role-playing therapy with a volunteer.

Susan Dietrich demonstrates some therapy techniques as Paula Moscati-Biondino works with a volunteer.

Paula Moscati-Biondino and Jodi Kirsner.

Lynda Adkins, Ann Marting, and Kris Peterson.

Bloodstein
Continued from page 1

accomplishment. The Handbook continues to be one of the most important works for researchers, teachers, therapists, and ultimately to the many stutterers and their families who benefitted from it.

Dr. C. Woodruff Starkweather, who nominated Bloodstein for the award, remarked, “His person-to-person encouragement of young researchers was certainly his most characteristic contribution. That encouragement was motivated by a pure desire to see research into stuttering advance.”

Bloodstein, an ASHA Fellow, received the Honors of the Association in 1989. The New York State Speech-Language Hearing Association, which Bloodstein helped found, awarded him its Honors in 1970 and a Professional Achievement Award in 1984. Bloodstein has also served the field in administrative positions and on editorial boards, on ASHA’s Clinical Certification Committee and as a Legislative Councilor-at-Large.

The Malcolm Fraser Award has been presented annually by the SFA since 1997, honoring excellence in the field of fluency through service delivery, research, support for persons who stutter, or professional training or development of clinicians. The organization was started in 1947 by the late Fraser, a philanthropist and business leader who learned to cope effectively with his significant stuttering problem. Said Jane Fraser, current SFA president who is Malcolm Fraser’s daughter, “There is no one more deserving of this award than Dr. Bloodstein. He is such an outstanding scholar and a gentleman in the finest sense of the word.”

Nominations guidelines for the 2000 Malcolm Fraser Award will be available later this year. For more information about Division 4 and its activities, visit the division’s page on ASHA’s Web site at www.asha.org/professionals/division/ sid_4.htm. For more information about SFA, visit the organization’s Web site at www.stutterersfa.org.

**STUTTERING FOUNDATION OF AMERICA**

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