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INSAR Mission Statement

To promote the highest quality autism research in order to improve the lives of individuals affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder.

INSAR is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.
It has truly been a pleasure to serve as President of the International Society for Autism Research (INSAR) for the past two years. INSAR continues to thrive and grow in its size, diversity, and impact. In the past year, we celebrated several accomplishments, which are highlighted in our 2016 annual report. Examples include holding the largest annual meeting to date with presenters coming from over 40 countries, hosting an online summer institute on familial aspects of autism that provided up-to-date scientific research to people worldwide, expanding the international content of the society’s journal, *Autism Research*, and creating new avenues for promoting early career scientists. We also now have our own INSAR app, which is allowing our members to track events and society information on their smartphones year-round.

Consistent with our strategic initiative to increase the impact of INSAR on policy and practice, INSAR funded a proposal that will support a meeting of scientists, thought leaders, stakeholders, and policy makers with the ultimate goal of creating an INSAR Policy Brief. The purpose of the Policy Brief is to summarize research on a topic that has significant implications for policy and/or practice which can serve as an informational resource document for a diverse community of stakeholders including INSAR members, those affected by autism, policy makers, practitioners, and the public. The inaugural INSAR Policy Brief will focus on “Improving Employment Outcomes for People with Autism.” With approximately one-half million youth with autism entering adulthood over the next decade and a large percentage of young adults failing to receive adequate services and employment opportunities, this Policy Brief is extremely timely and relevant to the needs of those with autism and their families. Recent surveys find that over one-third of young autistic adults have never been employed or continued education after high school. We are pleased that the people leading this effort represent countries from across the globe, including the US, Sweden, and Australia, as these challenges affect individuals with autism worldwide. We look forward to this project coming to fruition in 2017. We also aimed to further INSAR’s impact on policy and practice by increasing engagement in all of our activities by people directly affected by autism. The goal is to foster communication between autism researchers and individuals with ASD, to ensure that our efforts are fully aligned with, and incorporate, the perspectives of those on the autism spectrum.

One of the most gratifying parts of my role as President of INSAR has been getting to know our INSAR members who come from all parts of the world, including students, researchers, sponsors, advocates, and those affected by autism. As I’ve met each of these INSAR members, I have been impressed by their energy, passion, and commitment to autism research and its role in developing more effective screening and diagnostic tools, treatments, and services. I especially want to acknowledge the tireless work of many volunteers who make INSAR possible, including the INSAR board members, committee chairs, annual meeting chairs and scientific program chairs. These committed volunteers not only make our annual meeting successful; but their efforts are felt throughout the year as they make plans for IMFAR, recruit new members, lead committees, distribute newsletters, and organize events such as the summer institute.

Our success critically depends on the support of our sponsors. I want to thank Autism Speaks, Simons Foundation, Autism Science Foundation, Hillbrand Foundation, Nancy Lurie Marks Family Foundation, Roche, and the Escher Fund for Autism for their contributions, which made it possible to reduce registration fees for students and individuals from low- and middle-income countries, host the summer institute, and hold events designed to promote the careers of young autism researchers, among other activities. I also want to express our gratitude for the efforts of the wonderful staff at Association Resources and Conference Direct, who are responsible for the day-to-day operations behind INSAR. We depended on them daily to accomplish our goals.

Last year, we updated our mission statement, which represents INSAR’s strong commitment to use rigorous science to improve the lives of those affected by ASD and our belief that the maturing field of autism research is poised to have an increasing impact on policy and practice. This year, we took important steps toward realizing the vision that our mission statement embodies. Many of those steps are highlighted in our annual report. I hope you enjoy reading it and are as inspired as I am by our organization.

Yours sincerely,

Geraldine Dawson, PhD, President
Our global reach focus is a vital part of INSAR’s aim to improve the lives of those affected by autism through the highest quality research.

INSAR is committed to increasing the numbers of international researchers attending our annual meeting, and benefiting from membership of the Society year-round. We have very low membership rates for individuals from low- and middle-income countries ($10/$5 for non/students from low/lower-middle income countries), who can also register for IMFAR at reduced rates.

We continue to receive a strong number of applications for INSAR’s Diversity and PLIC travel awards, and a total were awarded (at a total cost of $36,000) to enable researchers from across the globe, and from under-served communities, to attend IMFAR 2016.

INSAR’s Cultural Diversity Committee (co-chaired by Marshalyn Yeargin-Allsopp, Alexia Rattazzi, and Sandra Vanegas) works hard throughout the year to represent the interests and needs of this global autism research community, ensure international members are included and welcomed at IMFAR, and advance research on diverse groups affected by ASD.

Cultural Diversity Committee Mission:

- Increase membership diversity for INSAR as a whole
- Foster scientific career development for underrepresented groups in the autism research community
- Promote cultural diversity issues as a regular part of the annual IMFAR meeting
- Promote the inclusion and consideration of issues of diversity in scientific autism research
- At IMFAR meetings, increase the comfort and feeling of belonging for people visiting from less-represented countries

We accomplish our mission by maintaining regular contact with members through our quarterly newsletter, social media, and annual IMFAR activities. We also provide input to INSAR on Regional IMFAR meetings. The next regional IMFAR will be in Stellenbosch, South Africa, September 7-9, 2017. If you’d like to receive communication from the committee, let us know (insarculturaldiversity@gmail.com). You can also follow us on Twitter, @INSAR_CD.

IMFAR ACTIVITIES

Pre-Conference Workshops: The pre-conference workshops allow interested members to discuss highly pertinent issues related to cultural diversity and ASD. This year’s pre-conference will highlight “Global Perspectives on the Autism Experience.”

Networking Luncheons: Since 2011, networking luncheons have been held to unite researchers from across the globe, representing between 12 to 15 different countries.
GLOBAL REACH

Diversity Ambassador: We provide Cultural Diversity Ambassador buttons to recognize conference attendees with interests in cultural diversity and ASD.

REGIONAL IMFAR

INSAR wishes to broaden its global reach by co-hosting Regional IMFAR Meetings in locations where our members may be less able to attend IMFAR annual meetings, and/or where local organizers are interested in building a stronger autism research community. Periodically the Board will issue a Call for Proposals for Regional IMFAR Meetings outside North America and Europe. INSAR Regional IMFAR Meetings are held in partnership with local research, clinical, and stakeholder groups.

We held the first Regional IMFAR in 2015 in Shanghai. The second Regional IMFAR will be held in September of 2017 in South Africa. The frequency of such meetings is to be decided, but INSAR will not hold a Regional IMFAR in the same year that the main IMFAR meeting takes place outside North America (currently scheduled for 2018, 2023, etc).

We are delighted to invite you to join us in South Africa for an exciting international congress entitled “Nurturing our Future.”

This will be the first ever Regional International Meeting for Autism Research (IMFAR) in Africa, and will be held in conjunction with the 19th Congress of the South African Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatrists and Allied Professions (SA-ACAPAP). We are joined by three partners – The African Association of Child & Adolescent Mental Health (AACAMH), the Paediatric Neurology and Development Association of Southern Africa (PANDA-SA), and the South African Institute for Sensory Integration (SAISI).

The congress will have three main themes:

• Autism spectrum disorder and related neurodevelopmental disabilities
• Infants, children and families
• Adolescent mental health and well-being
• Engaging Student/Trainees at IMFAR, San Francisco
The Student and Trainee Committee (STC) organized a range of activities, including an Early Career Pre-Conference Workshop, a Meet the Experts networking session, and a Student Social, in addition to running a Student Information Booth and supporting each of the INSAR Special Interest Groups (SIGs).

• Keeping Student Trainees Up-to-Date Year Round
The STC now distributes a biannual newsletter for INSAR student/trainee members that can also be downloaded from the INSAR website.

• Making Cutting-edge Autism Science Accessible to All
The Society took on sole sponsorship and management of the highly successful virtual INSAR Summer Institute launched last year. This summer’s topic was Familial Aspects of ASD. Organized by the STC, with INSAR members having major research programs in this area, serving as guest faculty, there were more than 1,000 real-time views of the lectures, which are open to anyone, and more than 600 views of archived sessions (previously available to INSAR members only and now to all visitors to our website).

• Creating a Place for Early Career Professionals
Building on the considerable success of the STC, the INSAR Board approved the creation of an Early Career Committee (ECC). The ECC will provide a “home” in INSAR for students/trainees as they move onward in their careers. The ECC will begin IMFAR programming and other activities in 2017.
INSAR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
The Lifetime Achievement Award is presented annually by the Executive Board of the International Society for Autism Research. This award acknowledges an individual who has made significant fundamental contributions to research on autism spectrum disorders that have had a lasting impact on the field. The focus of the awardee’s research can be in any discipline.

The 2016 Awardee was Christopher Gillberg from University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

INSAR ADVOCATE AWARD
This award honors community members and advocates who have influenced the ability to carry out autism research.

This year’s award went to Thomas Insel, who is a neuroscientist and psychiatrist at Verily (formerly Google Life Sciences) in Mountain View, California.

SLIFKA/RITVO INNOVATION IN AUTISM RESEARCH AWARD
The Alan B. Slifka Foundation promotes innovative research on autism spectrum disorders conducted by junior investigators. The purpose of the award is to lead to new treatments and improvements in the quality of life of individuals with autism.

This year’s award went to Klaus Libertus from University of Pittsburgh for his project entitled, “Remote Assessment of Motor and Language Skills in Infants at High Familial Risk for ASD.”
Dissertation Awards

Dissertation Awards are presented annually to scientists and clinicians-in-training in all areas of autism research. Awards are for the best dissertation on autism accepted by the university in the year 2015.

The 2016 awardees were:

Melissa Kirkovski from Deakin University of Australia, for her dissertation entitled “The Influence of Biological Sex on Neurobiological Mechanisms Underlying Autism Spectrum Disorder: An Investigation of Neural Activity and Connectivity.”

Catherine Manning from University of Oxford for her dissertation entitled, “Motion Processing in Children with Autism.”

Young Investigator Awards

Young Investigator Awards are given for the best empirical research papers on autism published or in press in 2015, by an investigator who has been awarded their PhD or MD in the past seven years.

The awards went to:

Bonnie Auyeung, University of Edinburgh, for her article in Translational Psychiatry entitled, “Oxytocin Increases Eye Contact During a Real-time, Naturalistic Social Interaction in Males With and Without Autism.”

Brittany Travers, University of Wisconsin Madison, for her article in Molecular Autism, in March of 2015, entitled, “Atypical Development of White Matter Microstructure of the Corpus Callosum in Males with Autism: A Longitudinal Investigation.”

Diversity Awards

Diversity awards are presented to individuals who are currently members of INSAR, studying or working in autism research in health-related institutions, universities, public agencies, or other stakeholder-related activities. The purpose of the awards is to increase participation of individuals currently underrepresented in the biomedical, clinical, behavioral, and social sciences including individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups in developed countries and individuals with disabilities, including ASD.

In 2016, 12 awards were given.
PROFESSIONALS FROM LOW INCOME COUNTRIES AWARDS
Professionals From Low Income Countries Awards are presented to individuals who are currently members of INSAR, studying or working in autism research in health-related institutions, universities, public agencies, or other stakeholder-related activities who live in low- or middle-income countries. The purpose of this award is to increase participation in autism research across the globe, including in countries with limited resources. In 2016, 16 awards were given.

STUDENT TRAVEL AWARDS
Student Travel Awards are available to graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and medical students and residents actively engaged in autism research. First priority is given to students who are presenting their own original research at IMFAR 2016 and who received the highest abstract scores. In 2016, 55 awards were given.

EARLY CAREER WORKSHOP TRAVEL AWARDS
Up to ten Early Career Development Workshop Travel Awards were presented to current Student members who will be attending IMFAR 2016 and the Early Career Workshop (prior to IMFAR). In 2016, eight awards were given.

UPCOMING INSAR ANNUAL MEETINGS
The International Meeting for Autism Research (IMFAR) was convened for the first time in November 2001, to provide ASD researchers from around the world with a focused opportunity to share the rapidly moving scientific investigation of ASD. INSAR / IMFAR does not offer continuing education credits.

Save the dates for future INSAR events which are listed below. Find details on our website at www.autism-insar.org.

INSAR 2018
May 9 - May 12
de Doelen ICC Rotterdam
Rotterdam, Netherlands

INSAR 2019
May 1 - May 4
Palais des congrès de Montréal
Montreal, Canada

INSAR 2020
May 6 - May 9
Washington Convention Center
Seattle, Washington, USA

INSAR 2021
May 5 - May 8
Hynes Convention Center
Boston, Massachusetts, USA
In 2016, Autism Research pursued the INSAR strategic plan initiatives of 1) increasing the quality of research promoted through its annual meeting, journal, and other activities 2) representing and serving a diverse and global community and 3) disseminating science-based knowledge to inform research priorities, public policy, professional practice, and public understanding. Submissions of articles to Autism Research in 2016 were up by 11% over 2015. Autism Research is now published monthly and totally online. Acceptance and rejection rates have stayed roughly the same in the last two years. The acceptance rate for 2016 is artificially low in the table because many of the papers submitted in 2016 are still in the revision/review process. Nonetheless, efforts at increasing the quality of published papers will tend to increase the rejection rate over time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Submissions</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pending/Withdrawn</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>46</td>
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</tbody>
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Turnaround time to first decision has also remained the same. We aspire to bring this down to closer to 30 days and, with the help of conscientious reviewers, this remains a goal for 2017.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submission to first decision</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission to final decision</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission to acceptance</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>159</td>
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Autism Research continues to show increased interest from the autism community. Downloads via Wiley Online Library increased by 43.8% in 2016.

Autism Research has conducted an Author Workshop at the Shanghai Regional IMFAR Meeting and there has been an increased number of submissions from Asia. The Editorial Board has been increased by ten members to increase international representation.

The primary goals for 2017 include 1) continuing to increase the quality of published papers 2) increasing the number of high-profile review papers and commentaries and 3) ensuring that Autism Research publishes papers from investigators located throughout the worldwide community of autism researchers.
INSAR, a US not for profit organization, has seen consistent financial growth since its inception. As indicated in the Statement of Financial Position (Figure 1), the organization remains financially strong.

Along with our continued healthy financial stability over the past several years, we’ve seen consistent strength in membership for both full and student members (Figure 2).

Since 2009, the year in which the current budgeting and planning system was set in place, INSAR has witnessed continued strength in revenues which consistently outpace expenses (Figure 3).

Coupled with a financially healthy organization is INSAR’s clearly outlined approach for fund allocation and management of resources (Figure 4).

The majority of INSAR’s assets have been generated from annual IMFAR meeting revenues and are translated into the support for INSAR special projects, such as student and trainee workshops, travel awards, the regional meetings, and other activities that are consistent with our mission.
In May of 2016, the 15th Annual International Meeting for Autism Research (IMFAR) was held in Baltimore, Maryland, USA and hosted by IMFAR Meeting Chair, Dr. Rebecca Landa. The event was well-attended by a range of disciplines and nationalities; the Program Committee, led by Co-Chairs, Drs. Daniele Fallin and Stewart Mostofsky, selected over 1,400 presentations from over 40 countries for representation at the conference. Oral or panel sessions were dedicated to each of the 21 pre-specified content areas, including epidemiology; services; brain structure and function; diagnostic, behavioral and intellectual assessment; social behavior and social cognition; communication and language; cognition and attention; repetitive behaviors and interests; comorbid syndromes; early development; adult outcome; behavioral and pharmacological interventions across the lifespan; genetics; animal models; molecular biology; family issues; new technologies; and perspectives across cultures and countries. Three keynote speakers addressed topics of environmental health, molecular mechanisms of neurodevelopment disorders, and lifespan issues in ASD. Each lecture was accompanied by a panel of speakers invited by the keynote lecturers to provide a broader perspective on these topics and a forum for discussion. To support networking in a convivial atmosphere, poster sessions were paired with meals or refreshments. For those who missed some of this cutting-edge content, much of the IMFAR content is available for viewing on the INSAR website.

IMFAR 2016 opened with a very successful press conference, with coverage by the local ABC affiliate and the Baltimore Sun, as well as MedPage Today, Spectrum News, and Medscape. In total, we achieved over 757 million media impressions in 2016, up from 328 million in 2015. Social media activity surrounding IMFAR was also quite vigorous. We reached almost 13,000 people via Facebook, and there were 6,816 tweets about IMFAR. The annual Twitter #IMFARChat, hosted by SFARI, was very popular.

The event featured multiple networking and social events designed around specific interest areas. The Third Annual Early Career Development Workshop focused on grant proposal development, including advice from Senior Review Officers at the National Institutes of Health and small group discussions led by experienced grant writers with a successful track record in ASD research. An Early Career luncheon and a Student and Trainee Social Hour provided opportunities for networking, and a Meet the Experts Roundtable luncheon enabled trainees to connect with senior colleagues with similar research interests. The Cultural Diversity Pre-Conference Workshop highlighted recent research on cultural diversity and ASD. Both a Cultural Diversity Meet & Greet and a Cultural Diversity Networking luncheon offered a chance for an informal discussion and connecting with colleagues. The Community Advisory Committee hosted a Community Stakeholder Luncheon as a forum for communication between scientists and members of the autism community.

As in prior years, Special Interest Groups provided opportunities for like-minded researchers to discuss topics of increasing focus in autism research. These included groups focused on Anxiety in Autism: Mechanisms, Measurement, and Treatment; Multiple Risk Factors for ASD: Genetic Predisposition and Environmental Influences; Bridging the Research/Application Gap: Incorporating Autistic Intellect in Research Design and Evaluation; Moving Past the Categories: Creating Novel Re-conceptualizations of the ASD Diagnosis and Phenotype; Older Adults with ASD: The Consequences of Aging; Suicidality in Autism Spectrum Conditions: Setting Priorities for Future Research.
MEMBERSHIP TYPES

FULL MEMBERSHIP
For full membership, an individual must have a graduate degree from an accredited university, have publications in peer-reviewed journals related to autism research, and/or have external funding for autism related research. In addition, an individual may have other scientific credentials that they wish to submit to the membership committee for review. This membership type is a voting member.

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP
Student applicants must be enrolled in an undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, graduate, postgraduate, or postdoctoral training program involving autism-related research at an accredited university. This membership type is a voting member.

AFFILIATE MEMBERSHIP
Affiliate membership status is available for non-students, including community stakeholders such as families and individuals living with autism, who do not (yet) meet membership requirements, but wish to enjoy the benefits of membership, save voting privileges.

NOTE
Applicants from low-income and middle-income countries qualify for a largely reduced membership dues fee and annual meeting (IMFAR) registration rates.
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