

# The Newsletter for Hong Kong Association for Behavior Analysis 香港應用行為分析協會

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**Hong Kong Association for Behavior Analysis**



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## From the President's Desk

The academic school year is now in full swing and the busy streets of Hong Kong are crawling with learners sporting their freshly pressed uniforms navigating their way to school. The classrooms are humming again and it is no different for our HKABA members. We had the pleasure of hearing from Dr. Dickie Yu, who is currently a Professor in the Department of Psychology at The University of Manitoba, and the Director of St. Amant Research Center from Canada. HKABA was honoured to host two presentations given by Dr. Yu's on his research about the use of the Assessment of Basic Learning Abilities (ABLA) and Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention (EIBI). Dr. Yu provided those in attendance a thorough analysis of how to use the results from the ABLA to measure young children's ability between various visual and auditory cues. In the EIBI presentation, he also reconfirmed what many of us already know with empirical evidence that early intervention for children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is an effective treatment. Furthermore, the third cohort of the eager students of ABA has commenced their studies of the BCaBA program with the HKABA in the past August.

North of the border, the news for the field development of ASD is positive. An event is being held to bring knowledge of current practices and parents together in a conference called: 2013 China Autism Parent Conference. It will be held on November 10<sup>th</sup> 2013 at the Fudan University in Shanghai and it is estimated that up to a thousand parents will attend. Autism Speaks, One Foundation and the International Care for Autism Fund (ICAF) are coordinating and organizing the annual event for parents from many cities in China. Oversea speakers have been invited. These speakers will include: Dr. Sally Rogers from UC Davis MIND Institute, Dr. Eric Fombonne from the McGill University Health Center, Dr. Yi Wang and Dr. Zhou Xian Bing from the Pediatric and Neurological Department of Fudan University. I will have the honour of representing HKABA at the conference to present about the Applications of Applied Behavior Analysis in Asia. I am humbled and proud to be able to represent HKABA on the stage with so many experts to share our knowledge about the latest findings on the science of ABA and effective interventions with parents in China.

There is so much work to do, and this is yet another step in the right direction for us. From inviting professions like Dr. Yu to come to us and to extend our presence to speaking at the international conference in front of hundreds if not thousands of parents, our members are tirelessly working towards our mission and goals in bringing awareness of ABA and establishing standards of practice to the society.

Sincerely,

Emily Kwan, M.A.D.S., BCBA

# Professional Development in Applied Behavior Analysis

## Our BCBA & BAaBA Courses

HKABA received its approval for the BCaBA course sequence in the fall of 2012 and began with our first group of five students. Since then, we have offered the starter course (BA 801) twice and have enrolled a total of 11 students to date (see enrollment graph below). HKABA hopes to be adding to the more than 13,000 BACB certificants worldwide in the coming months and years.

Our current course sequence is approved through December 2013. We are in the process of revising our curricula to be consistent with the new requirements set forth by the BACB, Inc. HKABA will be expanding its curriculum to include BCaBA and BCBA courses.

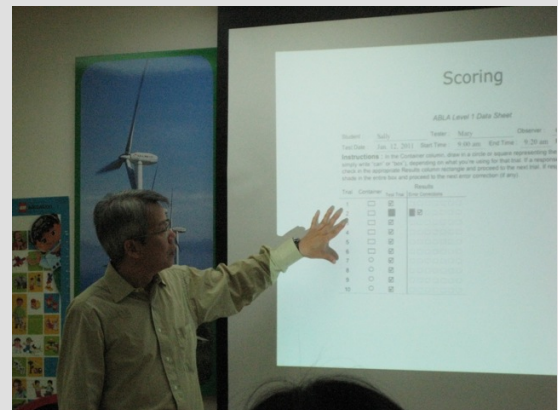
A Summary of Upcoming Changes to BACB Standards can be viewed on the BACB website, which I have included in this article.

Jeremy H. Greenberg, Ph.D., BCBA-D

## Dr. Yu's Presentation in Hong Kong

Dr. C.T. Yu is a Professor of Psychology, specializing in applied behaviour analysis, at the University of Manitoba, Canada, and the Director of St. Amant Research Centre. He has published extensively on developmental disabilities and autism spectrum disorders, and received numerous research grants from federal and provincial granting agencies in Canada.

We were honoured to have Dr. Yu presenting to us on the topics of “Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention (EIBI) for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Effectiveness of a Community-Based Program” and “Assessment of Basic Learning Abilities (ABLA): Recent Research with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders” in August during his visit to HK.



## Upcoming Event

### HKABA in the 2013 China Autism Parent Conference

It is very exciting that HKABA has been invited to speak in the 2013 China Autism Parent Conference, which will take place on November 10<sup>th</sup> at the Fudan University in Shanghai. Many speakers from overseas are invited to this event. It is estimated that hundreds of parents and professionals from all over China will be attending. We are very excited to have a chance to share our knowledge in the application of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) in Asia with parents and professionals in China.



#### JOIN US

We are currently seeking therapists and other trained professionals to join our clinical team! Our line of services include:

- Behavioral Intervention
- School Transition Program
- Social Skills Program
- School Shadowing
- Supervision for BCBA •
- Parent Training

If you are interested in behavioral intervention, case analysis, ongoing professional development and challenge yourself in the application of evidence based practice, please send your cover letter and CV to [emilykwan@kidsacademy.hk](mailto:emilykwan@kidsacademy.hk)

#### Qualification:

- Bachelor or higher degree in psychology, education, special needs, therapy, etc.
- At least 2 years of working experience with children
- Dedicated and passionate with children development
- Interest in the pursue of BCBA/BCaBA is an asset

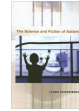
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# Book Review

## The Science and Fiction of Autism

- By Schreibman L. (2005)



This book provides a wealth of resources for broad audiences to combing through the information and controversies surrounding the topic of autism. The author makes an effort to bring the standards of intellectual rigor from the scientific community to the view of the general public without overwhelming the readers with too much scholarship and technical jargon.

The book opens with a chapter introducing a scientific approach to the understanding of autism and calling for more cooperation between parents and professionals. In Chapter 2, the author provides coverage of the basic features of autism and explains why some of them are or are not among the critical diagnostic criteria. In the following chapter, Schreibman reviews the diagnostic and assessment issues, in light of the historical debates and the current knowledge base.

Chapter 4 looks into another burning issue which draws a great number of controversies: what causes autism? This chapter provides good illustrations of how the “fictions” about the etiology of autism (i.e., psychogenic theories, MMR vaccination, or exposure to mercury) collapse in the face of scientific skepticism. While a great number of evidence have pointed to a genetic and neurobiological origin of autism, Schreibman points out that this is still a work in progress. And likewise, there has been no definitive answer but several candidates to a primary deficit in autism, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapters 6 to 9 address one of, if not the most, controversial area of autism: the treatments. As a leading expert in applied behavioural analysis, Schreibman advocates the behavioural model as the treatment of choice, which has a solid scientific foundation for its application and effects. After an introduction of the history of the behavioral treatment, Schreibman tackles the current criticism to this approach (e.g., use of aversives, robotic responding). She devotes the rest of Chapter 6 to make a direct comparison between discrete-trial training (DTT) and the naturalistic strategies. In Chapters 7 and 8, Schreibman reviews the treatments whose efficacy has not been validated by controlled scientific investigation (e.g., Floor Time) and those regarded as clearly ineffective (e.g., Facilitated Communication). A summary of the background and rationale, specific approaches, and existing evidence is provided for each of the treatments. Schreibman emphasizes there is no one-size-fits-all treatment for each child with autism. Individualized intervention seems to be the answer to the search for a “best” treatment. The final chapter lays out a practical discussion of the education arrangements for autistic children.

Joanna Huang, M. Phil. In Psychology

*\*\*Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the position of HKABA*

## Family Corner

### Working with the School to Create a Supportive Environment for Your Child's Learning

It's October and school has started for just over a month. Many parents worry how their children are coping with the new school year, especially for the parents of children with special needs. There is no doubt the school environments have significant impact on children's development. What steps can you take to support to create a positive learning environment for your children? Our suggestion is... you got to be **C.A.L.M.**!

**Collaboration:** Collaboration among your entire team is an important step to success. Your child may have worked with one or more professionals. These professionals usually have learned a lot about strategies that work the best for supporting your child. By having all the professionals and the school collaborating with each other, the school can save time on figuring out what to do by themselves. This will also ensure consistency across settings.

**Advocacy:** Being your child's best advocate is essential. As many children, especially those who are young and lack social skills, may find it challenging to express their needs, especially the school environment can be overwhelming for them. You can advocate your child's needs by creating an efficient home-school communication system and making sure that there is an IEP (individualized education plan) to guide the support at school for your child.

**Listening:** Being able to listen to your child's needs as well as his/ her teachers. When the school knows that you are listening to their concerns and working with them, they are more likely to work with you.

**Monitoring:** Many children's IEP sits on the shelf and is not looked at till the end of the school year. It is the best to work with the school and to have a system to continuously monitor your child's progress.

Stay **C.A.L.M.** and have a fruitful school year!

Dianna Yip, M.Ed., BCBA

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# Article Review

## Supporting Parents' Mental Health: Mindfulness Training

Mindfulness is defined as the ability to pay deliberate, nonjudgmental attention to our experience from moment to moment, resulting in a sharpened awareness of our thoughts, feelings and sensation. Recently in the research and clinical arena, there has been a dramatic growth in the investigation and application of Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs). Interventions such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) have received empirical support in treating anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, substance abuse and various somatic illnesses (e.g., chronic pain, heart disease, psoriasis). However, only few vigorous studies have examined the effects of MBIs on caregiving and/or mental health in parents and/or educators of children with special needs (Shonin, Van Gordan & Griffiths, 2013).

The quality of caregiving and mental health is a critical factor for assuring the well-being and educational success of the special needs population. Research has consistently shown stresses perceived by families raising children with disabilities influence the stability and quality of family relationships. Similarly, the task of educating children with special needs poses significant professional and emotional concerns for special education teachers. Therefore, interventions to help both parents and educators reduce stress and maintain well-being are essential so they can better fulfill their caregiving roles and maximize the educational benefits of the special education population.

Benn et al. (2012) argued that an MBI which centers on focused attention, cognitive flexibility, and emotion regulation can act as a potential psychological tool for both parents and educators. This "tool" becomes a flexible and adaptive coping strategy in emotionally demanding situations which, in turns, reduces stress, enhances psychological well-being and positive relationships and interactions.

To find out, they invited parents and educators from a school district in the U.S. They were all part of a special education summer extension program. They underwent an intensive mindfulness training called SMART in –Education (Stress Management and Relaxation Technique). The training components consisted of topics and activities such as breathing exercises, thoughts/feelings/body sensation awareness, body stretching and guided visualization. The participants also completed a survey at 3 different points (pre-training, post-training and 2 months post-training). These surveys measured their scores on dimensions such as mindfulness, stress/anxiety/depression level, subjective well-being, self-compassion, empathetic concern, teaching/parenting self-efficacy, emotion regulation efficacy and quality of parent-child interaction.

Results suggested a significant increase in mindfulness among participants. They were more aware of and present to their surroundings, physical sensations and emotions. They were also less judgmental. These competencies were found to mediate the influence of the training on stress and anxiety reductions. Enhancement of positive psychological functioning were also found. Participants



showed greater self-compassion, empathetic concern and forgiveness to others. Treatment effects persisted as shown in the 2- month post-training follow up.

Mindfulness training also positively influenced teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Educators perceived they could more effectively regulate their reactions to stressful situations in the classroom and feel more efficacious in their teaching competence. On the other hand, the same training did not significantly influence parents' beliefs in their own caregiving competence.

Several limitations in terms of research design were mentioned. As the empirical study of mindfulness and parenting is still in its infancy, many interesting questions are yet to be addressed. Future research of this line would generate significant implications of mindfulness based school-delivered programs to support parents and teachers with special needs.

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