

Child Emotion Research Laboratory Fund

The Child Emotion Research Lab, which houses the Wisconsin International Adoption Project, has established a fund for tax deductible contributions. All contributions received by the fund will be used for our research to promote optimal development in children with diverse early life experiences. We welcome contributions from individuals, families, small businesses, and corporations. All of the money received is used to support our research. Contributions may be made by clipping this coupon and mailing it in the enclosed envelope.

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Fall 2006

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Greetings from Dr. Pollak

Dear Parents,

It has been six months since we mailed out our first newsletter. Our team has been hard at work during this time. This spring we finished testing children who participated in two large and novel studies. This summer we have begun to analyze the data we collected and hope to have interesting results to share with you by late fall. One of the studies was designed to better understand how children experience stress and how this influences children's emotional behavior, coping abilities, and physical development. This study included about 160 children who were between the ages 9 and 15. The second study focused on the development of school-related abilities. In this project, we examined attention and memory abilities in 150 children between 8 and 10 years of age. Half of the children were tested in Madison and half in Minneapolis.

I want to extend my deepest thanks to all of the families who helped us with these important studies. We continue to design studies to address the questions brought to us by families created through international adoption, and appreciate the commitment that parents and children have shown by giving of their time and effort to participate in this work. Many families have spent a half to a full day in our lab and have also made multiple trips to the lab to complete these studies. I also want to acknowledge the very kind generosity of our comparison families. To make these studies scientifically rigorous, we need to compare the performance of internationally adopted children with age-matched peers residing with their birth parents. These parents and children donate their time in the spirit of helping—and indeed they help us! We remain indebted and thankful to all of the families who agree to participate in these studies and view all of you as our collaborators in this important work.

I hope your family had an enjoyable summer and I look forward to sending you more updates in the near future. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or ideas.

Sincerely,

Dr. Seth Pollak

Director, WI International Adoption Project

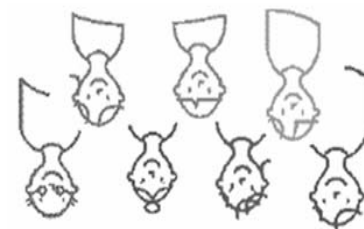
Medical Decision-Making Among Families Created Through International Adoption

By Cassandra Runke, M.S. Genetics Counseling



The purpose of this study was to explore how families created through international adoption approach medical decisions without complete family and medical history information for their children. I interviewed twenty-nine parents via telephone or in person. In general, the amount, accuracy, and helpfulness of the information families

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Medical Decision-Making

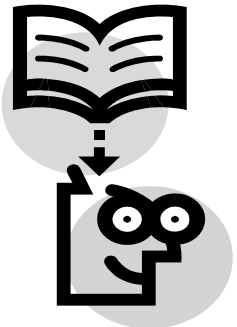
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receive varies greatly and often depends upon the country of origin. Some of the challenges met in the medical community that families discussed included insensitive, politically incorrect language, a lack of knowledge in the medical community about some of the common medical and emotional issues their children may be facing, as well as challenges specifically regarding meeting the emotional needs of their children with available counseling. Forty-five percent of the parents interviewed felt that they had not met any challenges in obtaining medical care for their child. When asked what parents wished healthcare workers kept in mind in regards to children that have been internationally adopted, they mentioned more sensitive language use regarding the family as well as more knowledge about the challenges and issues children may have depending upon the country of origin. Families that also had a child join their family by birth did not find they made decisions differently for their birth children, but many mentioned being more cautious with medical care of children that had joined the family through adoption.

Healthcare workers that specialize in the care of children who have been internationally adopted were also questioned about their perspective of medical care in the absence of family and medical history information. Very similarly to families interviewed, the healthcare workers receive varying degrees of information with different levels of accuracy and helpfulness depending upon the country of origin. When asked what healthcare workers wish families kept in mind when adopting, they mentioned families should do research before choosing a pediatrician and become knowledgeable in regards to the potential challenges their child may face. All healthcare workers interviewed mentioned the positive, rewarding experiences they have had working with families created through international adoption.

Questions and Answers about WIAP

We thought this newsletter would be a good place to answer some of your questions. If you have a question that you would like to see addressed in this newsletter, please email it to Barb Roeber, our Community Outreach Coordinator, at roeber@waisman.wisc.edu We will try to answer more questions from our readers in our next issue.



Question: I joined the WIAP registry last year. Why have I not been contacted to participate in a study?

Answer: There could be several reasons why you have not heard from us. One reason could be that your child was not in the age range for any studies that we ran in the past year. That range was from 5.5 years to 15 years old. Another reason could be that your child joined your family when he/she was between the ages of 8 months and 12 months old. This group of children was not included in any studies that we ran last year. Yet another reason could be due to the fact that last year we included children in our studies who spent very specific amounts of time in an orphanage setting. As new stud-

ies are introduced, we hope to vary the ages and criteria so that many different groups of children will have opportunities to participate. If you have not been contacted for a study, please feel free to contact us to see if we have a study running, or soon to be running, that might be appropriate and interesting for your family.

Question: I am interested in your study of oxytocin in urine. Where can I go to get my child tested?

Answer: Many of you read about the hormone oxytocin in a research article published by our group. The urine analysis that we used is very new and has only been approved for research purposes at this time. It is not available to the public because no protocol for testing guidelines has been developed and more research needs to be completed to better understand what the results of this test can mean. Only one scientific report has been released about administering oxytocin to humans. This was done using a nasal spray in adults, but the effects lasted only a few seconds. We expect that more research will be conducted in this area in the future.

Study Reveals How Attention Deficit Drugs Work

UW-Madison researchers report in the journal **Biological Psychiatry** that attention deficit hyperactivity disorder drugs primarily target the prefrontal cortex, a region of the brain that is associated with attention, decision-making and an individual's expression of personality. Read more about this study: <http://www.news.wisc.edu/12681.html>

WIAP Staff Receive Awards

****Alison Wismer Fries** has been awarded the Jeanette Anderson Hoffman Memorial Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship by the Waisman Center. Alison was selected because of her academic achievements and her innovative research on the biological bases of post-institutionalized children's language, social, and emotional development.

****Dr. Seth Pollak** has been awarded a named professorship by the UW Board of Regents, one of the highest honors the UW gives to faculty members. Dr. Pollak now holds the title of College of Letters and Sciences Distinguished Professor of Child Psychology for his studies of how social experiences affect underlying causes of emotional, learning, and behavioral problems in young children. *Our warmest congratulations to both Alison and Dr. Pollak!*

Ways You Can Become Involved in New Research Projects

Our collaborative outreach project with Wisconsin's adoption agencies has put us in contact with many families created through international adoption who are interested in participating in our future research studies. In the past year we have added over 300 families to our research registry. It is important that we continue to connect with families who might be interested in joining the registry to help with future studies. If you know a family who has yet to join the registry or who perhaps has just welcomed a child into their family, we would appreciate you making them aware of our registry.

We also are looking for children who joined their families through birth to participate in control groups for our studies. Please feel free to tell your family and friends about this opportunity to help with our research.

Later this fall, we will have a study that will include children who joined their families through domestic adoption (children who were born in the United States and adopted in the United States). We will be looking for children 5.5 to 7 years old to help with this study.

Studies running at this time include

- *A study of visual regulation of attention for children ages 9-11 years
- *A study of learning and social development for children ages 5.5-7 years

New studies to begin this fall include

- *A study of the development of attentional abilities for children ages 9-11
- *A study of sensory-motor development for children ages 8-9
- *A study of emotion for children ages 8-9

To learn more about the registry or to get involved with any of our studies, please contact us at 608-262-5148 or email us at ChildEmotion@waisman.wisc.edu

Feel free to pass this newsletter along to neighbors, friends and family!

There are a number of ways you can become involved in our research at the WIAP.