

**Aiming for
excellence:**

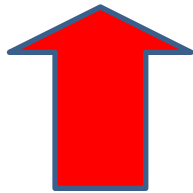


***Current approaches, confidence & training
needs of occupational therapists who provide
services to people with ASD***

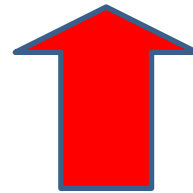
- **Dr. Jill Ashburner, Principal Research & Development Officer, Autism Queensland**
- **Professor Sylvia Rodger, The University of Queensland**
- **Assoc. Prof. Jenny Ziviani, The University of Queensland**

Why services for people with autism have become an issue?

Demand for services

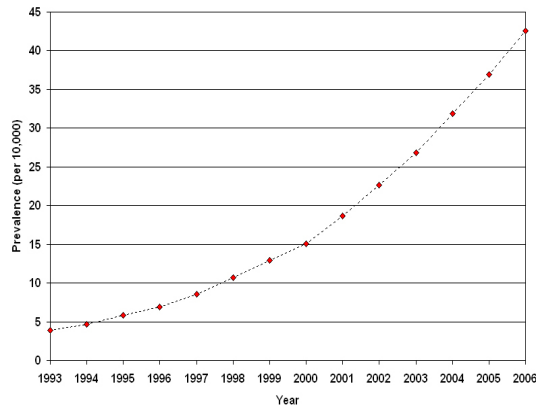


Increased prevalence



Increased funding
for early
intervention

Autism Prevalence (Ages 6 - 17)
(from USDE data)



Increased prevalence

- **Dramatic increase in prevalence of ASD:**

- **1 in 2500** prior to 1990 estimated (Caronna & Halfon, 2003; Charman, 2003)
- **1 in 160** estimated Australian prevalence (excluded PDD-NOS) (McDermott, Williams, Ridley, Glasson & Wray, 2006)
- **1 in 110** (Autism & Developmental Disabilities

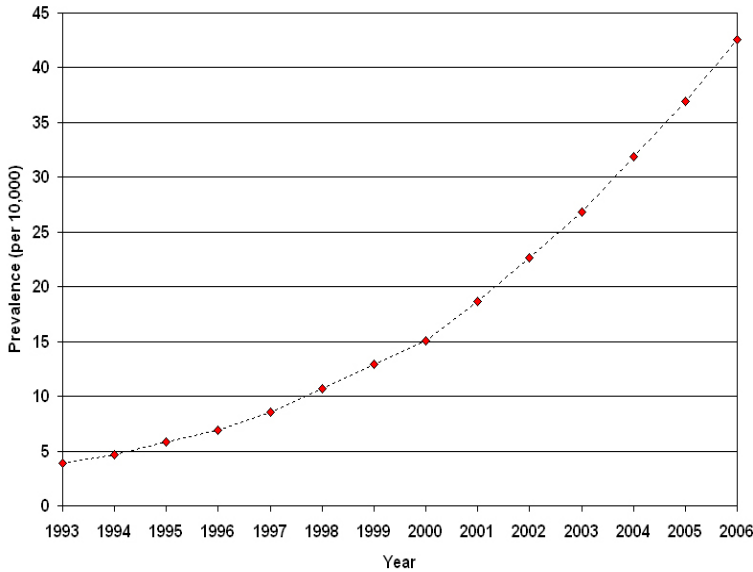
Monitoring Network Surveillance Year 2006)

- **1 in 64** (Baron-Cohen et al., 2009)

- **Contributing factors include:** (Leonard et al., 2010)

- **11/10** Changes in diagnostic criteria

Autism Prevalence (Ages 6 - 17)
(from USDE data)



Increased Prevalence

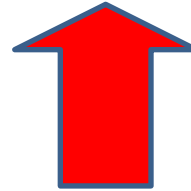
- Is there a true increase in prevalence?? (Fombonne, 2005)
- The number of children with ASD in Australia is now greater than the number of children with cerebral palsy, diabetes, deafness, blindness & leukemia combined



New funding for services

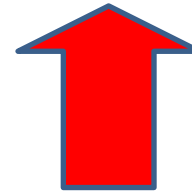
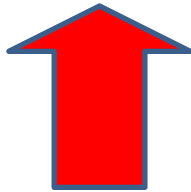
- Australian Government committed \$190 million over 4 years for *Helping Children with Autism Package*

Many more OTs providing services to children with ASD with varying levels of autism-specific experience

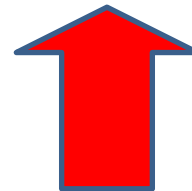
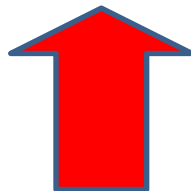


Increased employment of OTs
by service providers

Increased number of
OTs in private practice



Demand for services



11/11/10 Increased
prevalence

Increased funding for
services

Keeping current on autism interventions can be overwhelming!!!

Functional Communication Training

SCERTS

RDI

Wilbarger Protocol

DIR Floortime

ABA

TEACCH

Sensory stories

LEAP

Alert Program

Denver Model

Social stories

Sensory Integration Therapy

Therapeutic Listening

Auditory Integration Training

Visual cues



Our response to the problem:

Research funded by Occupational Therapists Board of Queensland 2009 – 2010:

- *Current Approaches, Confidence and Training needs of Occupational Therapists who provide Services to People with ASD*
 - 4 focus groups of OTs re ASD services
 - Statewide survey to all Queensland registered OTs



Occupational Therapists Board of Queensland





Focus groups

- 2 groups of occupational therapy clinicians
 - from private practices, Queensland Health, Dept. of Communities, Education Queensland, AEIOU, Autism Queensland etc.
- 1 group of occupational therapy supervisors
- 1 group of training providers
 - Queensland Universities, OT Australia, and private professional development providers



Information gathered through focus groups

- A broad range of key knowledge & skills to work with people with ASD including:
 - Detailed understanding of ASD
 - Family & person-centred practices
 - Functional approaches to challenging behaviours
- Concerns about many OTs attending professional development on narrow, specialized techniques that unsupported by evidence
 - Conflict of interest of private professional development presenters who often benefit financially

11/11/10

Attended by OTs who are keen to learn in the absence of comprehensive

Statewide Survey



- Survey sent to all registered OTs in Queensland
- 818 of 2,547 registered OTs responded (32% response rate)
- 235 of these provided services to people with ASD

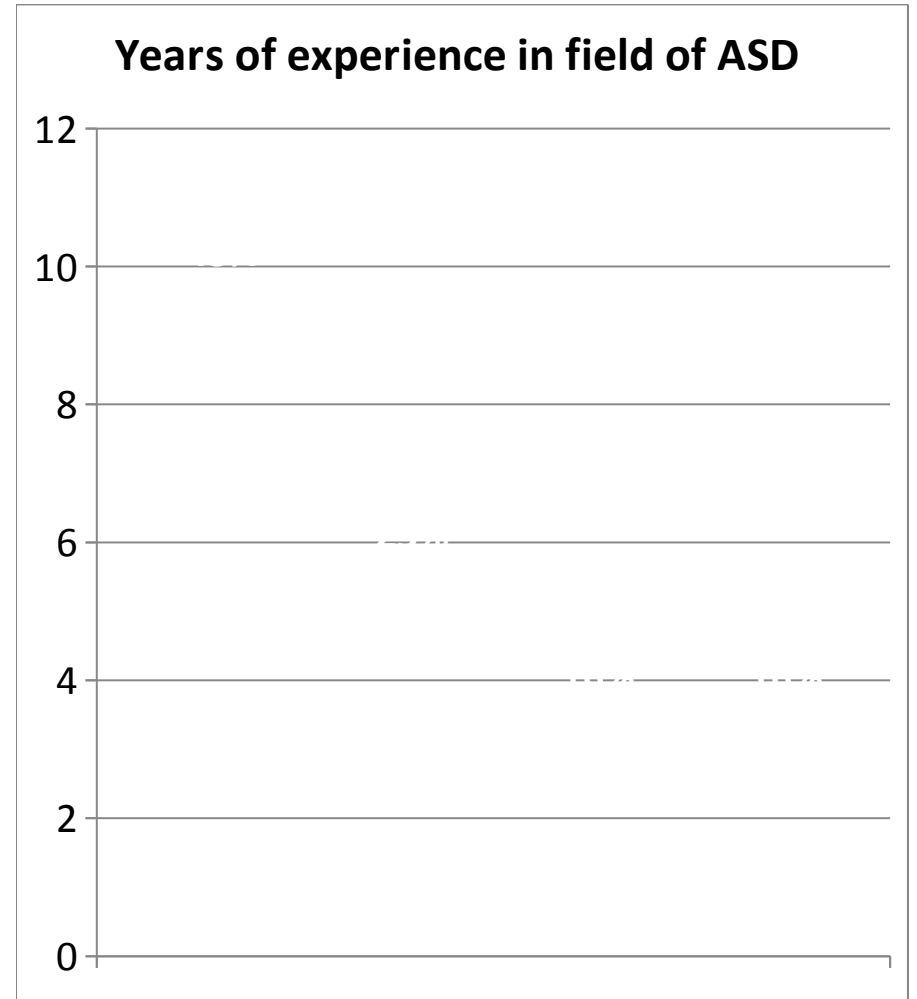
Where do the OTs who provide services to people with ASD work?



Appears to have
increased in recent
years

11/11/10

How experienced are these OTs?

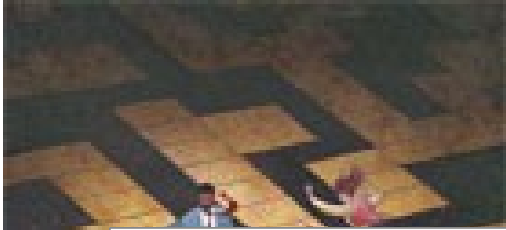




Toddler years (1 to 3) are a time of great growth and change, and a typical toddler will gain command of motor, cognitive and behavioral skills at a rapid rate

ADAM





Perceived Service Gaps



Is working in autism field more challenging?

What is most challenging about working in autism field?



11/11/10

How confident do therapists feel?



What do therapists want to learn more about?



11/11/10

Preferred modes of professional development



11/11/10

Our response to the need for further autism-specific PD:

Research funded by Occupational Therapists Board of Queensland 2010 – 2011:

- Action research framework being used to develop & evaluate an **OT professional development program on autism**, including:
 - face-to-face course



Occupational Therapists Board of Queensland





Comprehensive evidenced-informed professional development

- Development of 3-day workshop to be run in 2011:
“OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY APPROACHES WITH CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS”
 - Occupational impact of ASD
 - Interventions commonly used with children with ASD
 - Evidenced-informed OT intervention strategies for children with ASD
 - Approaches relevant to different stages & contexts in the life of a child or adolescent with ASD



How do we aim to achieve excellence?

- *In the spider-web of facts, many a truth is strangled.* (Paul Eldridge)
 - By ensuring that the information in the course is grounded in evidence, we hope to give OTs the skills to sort fact from fiction when it comes to interventions for people with ASD.
- *Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere.* (Chinese Proverb)