



Autism Expert Advocates Technological Solution to Senate Hearings

In her submission to the Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology inquiry on the issue of funding for the treatment of autism, Canadian autism expert, Dr Jeanette Holden, advocated the use of technology to help alleviate the problem of insufficient funding for autism services.

Ottawa (PRWEB) December 11, 2006 -- Testifying before the Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology inquiry on the issue of funding for the treatment of autism Canadian autism expert, Dr. Jeanette Holden, from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario advocated the use of computer technology as a means to alleviate the problem of providing autism intervention services to families of children with autism.

Speaking about solutions to the lack of necessary funding, Dr Holden said, "We've got to look at technology." She stated further that a Canadian company, Virtual Expert Clinics, has an online program called AutismPro that is not meant to replace therapists, but gives parents on waiting lists a chance to start doing something with their children.

Dr Holden is currently undertaking a research trial consisting of 46 families across Ontario, including 63 adult care providers and 52 children aged 2 to 9, using AutismPro. The study is being done in partnership with Autism Ontario and Autism Spectrum Disorder - Canadian American Research Consortium (ASD - CARC) out of Queen's University. Participants have been provided with a one year subscription to the program.

"Early results of our research trial indicate that parents are strongly impressed by AutismPro as a valuable tool for providing care to their children," said Cynthia Howroyd, CEO and President of Virtual Expert Clinics. A speech pathologist who worked with children with autism in New Brunswick. Ms Howroyd developed the online program as a solution to the dilemma of providing timely autism services with limitations in dollars and trained therapists and the startling growth in the disorder.

"Because AutismPro is online intelligent software and because it integrates the full range of evidence based interventions in autism," said Ms Howroyd, "it is also a powerful tool for researchers to collect data on intervention choices and related outcomes for different children." A speech pathologist who worked with children with autism in New Brunswick, Ms Howroyd developed the online program as a solution to the inadequacy of autism services caused by under-funded agencies and the startling growth in the learning disorder.

The Senate Committee heard witnesses from government, autism agencies (both private and public) and parents of children with autism through November and into December.

A private members motion put forth by New Brunswick Liberal MP Andy Scott calling for the federal government to develop a national autism strategy was passed on December 5. On December 7, the United States senate unanimously passed a bill authorizes nearly a billion dollars in spending for autism research and programs.

About Dr Jeanette Holden

Professor, Departments of Psychiatry and Physiology and Centre for Neuroscience Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario; Director, Cytogenetics and DNA Research Laboratory, Ongwanada, Kingston, Ontario. Current research topics include: the genetics of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs); genetics of developmental disabilities (Fragile X syndrome, X-linked mental retardation syndromes)' identifying environmental factors contributing to ASD susceptibility; epidemiology of ASDs in Canada; identification of new syndromes associated with ASDs or intellectual disabilities; identification of family characteristics associated with ASDs; and the genetics of psychiatric and behavioural disorders (bipolar disorder, depression, schizophrenia and ADHD).

About AutismPro

AutismPro is a 9-step online treatment program for parents and professionals of young children with autism. AutismPro was developed over a two year period with clinical content from approximately 30 therapists, the Geneva Centre for Autism and an advisory board of internationally recognized experts, including Dr Kathleen Quill, author of the best-selling DO-WATCH-LISTEN-SAY: Social and Communication Intervention for Children with Autism (2000, Brookes Publishing Company, ISBN 1557664536). AutismPro was launched at the Geneva Centre for Autism's 2006 International Symposium. For more information on AutismPro, visit <http://www.autismpro.com>

Contact:

Thomas Mitchell
Media Manager

AutismPro
46 Dineen Drive, Suite 347
National Research Council Building
Fredericton, New Brunswick
E3B 9W4

Direct Line: 506.474.8134
Toll Free: 1.866.462.0991

Web Site: www.autismpro.com

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