



Facilitators and Barriers to Positive Experiences for Families of Individuals with Autism

Jill C. Fodstad^{1,2}

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This Special Issue of curated articles in the *Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* (RJAD) focuses on families of individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Research on the shared experiences of family members of a person with ASD is not a new area in our field but is one that receives less focus when compared to the vast amount of literature focusing on the affected individual. Parents and siblings typically play the most vital roles in the lives of persons with ASD. Advocating and supporting a child or sibling with ASD across the lifespan has been noted to be related to an elevated level of individual and overall family strain (Begum & Mamin, 2019; Karst & Van Hecke, 2012; Sim et al., 2018). To be best able to support the needs of persons with ASD, we must also embrace and support those who are most critical to their success and well-being — their family. Thus, the purpose of this special issue is to highlight the needs, experiences, and outcomes of parents and siblings of individuals with ASD.

This Special Issue is different from many special issues in that the articles contained here were not submitted upon a targeted call for topically focused papers. Rather, the review articles in this issue are ones that were collated from already accepted articles which were ready for publication in RJAD's que. While this may not seem noteworthy, I believe it demonstrates the improved recognition and focus on the needs of families. This collection of ten high-quality review articles generates a summary of important evidence demonstrating the facilitators and barriers to positive experiences and outcomes for the family members of a person with ASD. The topics addressed here are varied but are equally important. Research areas summarized in this issue include families of diverse backgrounds (Kim et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2021; Rios & Burke,

2021); parent-mediated intervention (Lee & Meadan, 2021; Liao et al., 2021); diagnosis (Makino et al., 2021; McCrimmon & Gray, 2021); measurement (Madarevic, et al., 2021); and emotional well-being (Deguchi et al., 2021; Ghanouni & Hood, 2021). The authors not only highlight important findings that are of clinical relevance, but also note gaps in the literature that should be continued to be investigated to ensure the health and success of the family unit.

It is my hope that this issue provides you, the RJAD reader, with a highly focused and easily readable summary of the literature. The articles presented should aid you in thinking critically about how we as researchers, teachers, clinicians, providers, and other stakeholders can meet the unique and diverse needs of those with ASD and also their families. Similarly, the literature gaps identified across these articles should provide a catalyst for further research with the sole intent of ensuring that the highlighted barriers are minimized and positive experiences for all families are maximized.

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✉ Jill C. Fodstad
jfodstad@iupui.edu

¹ Indiana University School of Medicine, Indianapolis, IN, USA

² Indiana University Health Physicians, Indianapolis, IN, USA

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