

Identification and Diagnosis of Autism in Australia: Driving change in developmental outcomes through Social Attention and Communication Surveillance (SACS)

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A critical step in the pathway to early intervention and support services for children with autism and their families is early identification and diagnosis. We will first examine trends over time in the age and frequency of autism diagnoses in Australia to illustrate the substantial gap between the age that a reliable and accurate diagnosis of autism is possible, and the age at which children currently receive a diagnosis. We have been working within the Autism Cooperative Research Centre (Autism CRC) to reduce the age of diagnosis through the Social Attention and Communication Study-Revised (SACS-R). The SACS-R utilises developmental surveillance to monitor the early signs of autism between 12- to 24-months-of-age within the Victorian Maternal and Child Health system. The results of this 4-year research program will be presented, with subsequent evidence provided for the long-term developmental outcomes than ensue following early identification and diagnosis of autism. Finally, we will discuss the translation of our work into a free app for parents called ASDetect, which also serves to educate and raise awareness of the early signs of autism in Australia and abroad.