Earlier Identification of Autism Spectrum Disorder

FACULTY

Linda R. Watson, EdD, CCC-SLP, is a professor of Speech & Hearing Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, with more than 30 years of clinical and research experience with children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). She is a cofounder of the Program in Early Autism Research, Leadership, and Service (PEARLS), which began at UNC-CH and now involves collaborators across multiple institutions. The mission of PEARLS is to foster universal screening to identify infants and young toddlers who are at an elevated likelihood of later diagnoses of ASD and to develop, evaluate, and disseminate effective interventions for these children and their caregivers. In addition, Watson has worked for more than 10 years with a multidisciplinary team of collaborators, including practicing educators, to develop and test a school-based intervention to improve social communication and play skills of preschoolers with ASD, with the ultimate goal of improving their broader outcomes in areas such as socialization, language, and academic achievement.

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Nonfinancial Disclosures:

- Co-author of the First Year(s) Inventory (not currently available for clinical use), a parent report screener to detect infants and toddlers who are at an elevated likelihood of later diagnoses of ASD, which will be discussed in the presentation