

Executive Director's Column

by Patricia S. Lemer, M.Ed., NCC, M.S. Bus.



EnVISIONing a Bright Future

With this issue of “New Developments” I am extremely excited to announce the publication of *EnVISIONing a Bright Future: Interventions that Work for Children and Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders*. Just wait until you see Bill Greaves’ gorgeous cover! In many ways my entire career has been pointing towards this book. I am extremely fortunate to have learned from some of the best in many fields: neurology, psychology, occupational therapy, speech-language therapy, medicine, and, especially, optometry.

Autism has become a business in a thriving marketplace of interventions delivered by talented and experienced practitioners, most of whom have something to offer. New approaches are emerging every day, claiming to be the missing link. Now, thanks to the generosity of the Optometric Extension Program (OEP) and its Executive Director, Bob Williams, the public has a single reference for understanding the causes of AD(H)D, learning disabilities and autism, and a thorough description of treatments that address them.

You may be wondering why I chose a publisher of books primarily on vision. DDR members know about my passion for understanding the role of vision and visual dysfunction in autism, attention deficits, learning disabilities, and “mental” illness.

I am known to write, lecture, or pontificate about vision whenever and wherever the opportunity arises. My pamphlet, “Attention Deficits: A Developmental Approach” also published by OEP, came about when I realized that symptoms of AD(H)D could also occur in kids with nutritional, sensory and visual problems. I am so proud that the three sponsoring organizations for this newsletter represent the optometrists who have become, for me, a second family.

EnVISIONing a Bright Future gathers together the knowledge and expertise of two dozen professionals from optometry, medicine, biochemistry, nutrition, education, psychology, sensory therapies, and more. As the book’s editor, I am so grateful to them for their willingness to take the time and make the effort to add their wisdom to this book.

Contributors include many DDR Professional Advisory Board members who have supported me for years. Barbara Loe Fisher, Co-founder and President of the National Vaccine Information Center (NVIC), looks at the significant role of vaccines. In her chapter she raises the important question of what “fooling the immune system” does long term.

I am deeply indebted to my dear friend and long-time colleague, DDR co-founder Kelly Dorfman. This book brings together a good number of her columns from “New Developments” in a sequential, orderly fashion. The chapter on “Total Load Theory,” upon which I base the whole premise of the book, and “A Biomedical Approach to Autism Spectrum Disorders,” written with Anju Usman, laid the foundation for other treatments.

This book also presents, for the first time, the relationship between biological issues and sensory problems, and the work of some international experts. Readers can learn how so many children’s health issues contribute to sensory dysfunction, and the synergistic effect of different therapies upon each other. Audiologist Dorinne Davis, Optometrist Randy Schulman, and others from diverse disciplines balance the body’s biochemistry, integrate reflexes, touch, movement, sound and vision. I am proud to present the reflex work of Brendan O’Hara from Australia to the world of developmental delays for the first time in America.

In the chapter on homeopathy I have brought together the various approaches from classical homeopaths Judyth Reichenberg-Ullman and her husband Robert, with Barbara Brewitt and homotoxicology. The chapter that addresses improving communication and social-emotional issues through play, includes Greenspan’s FloorTime, Gutstein’s RDI, Son-Rise and other cross-disciplinary approaches.

I have included Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) and Neurofeedback as therapies based on Operant Conditioning. A chapter with some heart-warming stories is “Healing with Animals,” which includes working with horses, dogs, dolphins and other furry and not-so-furry creatures.

I have really loved working on this book, especially trying to organize the complex, ground-breaking work of Dietrich Klinghardt and my last chapter on “Prioritizing Therapies.” For me, taking very complex material and making it understandable to a lay person is SO MUCH FUN! It is like combining assembling a thousand piece jigsaw puzzle with Sunday’s double crostic: both pleasures from my childhood.

I never considered myself a writer. Talker, yes. Wordsmith, maybe. Writer, no. Only in recent years has writing become enjoyable. Letitia Lang, my straight-laced high school English teacher thought I had no business being placed in Honors English, and I believed her. Not until fortune brought me my superb DDR newsletter editors did I learn the “rules” of writing and editing. I am so grateful to Aimee Doyle, Carol Kranowitz, Mary Rentschler and Anat Sichel for guiding me. They may not realize the roles they played in this book too. Mary has also been a “rock” for me along the way. Her chapter on Educational Kinesiology (Brain Gym) is exquisite.

I envision this book leading to many other opportunities. I am honored to be speaking about autism at the annual COVD conference in October. Maybe the contributors and I can take this book on the road as the winning ice skaters have done for years. Yes, the “market” for it is huge: good news and bad. Once it is available, May 1st, we’ll see. In the meantime, you can pre-order it from OEP at a 15% savings.

So now what will I do with my free time every evening and weekend? For the past five years, it has been “working on my book.” I know! I can spend it enjoying my granddaughter, Penelope.