



# ECHO Autism Communities Symposium

8:00 - 8:15 am CT

**Kristin Sohl, MD**

Welcome & Opening Remarks

8:15 - 9:15 am CT

**Morénike Giwa Onaiwu, PhD**

## ^ Sincerely Your Autistic Child: Amplifying Perspectives Across the Lifespan and Across the Spectrum

Morénike Giwa Onaiwu, PhD, MA, co-editor of the book, *Sincerely Your Autistic Child*, will amplify the perspectives of autistic people and provide conceptual and practical information to help people avoid common mistakes and misconceptions, so autistic people feel truly accepted, valued, and celebrated for who they are.

9:15 - 10:15 am CT

**Catherine Lord, PhD**  
**Somer Bishop, PhD**  
**Valeria Nanclares, PsyD**  
**Lonnie Zwaigenbaum, MD**

## ^ Equitable Access to Global Autism Evaluations

In the last couple of decades, the autism prevalence rates have increased steadily; however, the number of trained professionals to be able to provide assessments has not kept pace with this demand. Today, there are significant inequities globally that impact access to appropriate evaluation processes: 1) scarcity of trained clinicians; 2) difficulties within healthcare systems that impact a clinician's ability to provide flexible diagnostic assessments (mandating or requiring specific instruments/tools); 3) lack of culturally sensitive and language-appropriate measures; and 4) lack of resources available to clinicians, to name a few of the challenges. These inequities and barriers are only exacerbated in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) or in remote or rural areas in higher income countries. Therefore, efforts need to be placed on ensuring training of clinicians able to apply best practice procedures for assessment, training on appropriate use of instruments available to aid in the clinical diagnosis and improving the systems of care to support clinicians in developing and exercising their clinical expertise beyond any one specific tool. This panel will discuss some of the barriers faced in equitable access to autism evaluations across the globe, the pros, and cons of standardized instruments within diagnostic contexts, and adaptations developed during COVID-19 and their potential application beyond the pandemic.

10:15 - 10:30 am CT

Break

10:30 - 11:30 am CT

Maya Moody, DO

^ **Neurodiversity**

The term "neurodiversity," describes variations in thinking, feeling, and behaving. Thought, feeling, and behavior patterns that fall within the range of what is considered normal are called neurotypical; those that differ are labeled neurodivergent. Understanding neurodiversity and how that can improve interactions with the neurodiversity community will be discussed.

11:30 am - 12:30 pm CT

Rena Sorensen, PhD

^ **Behavior As Communication**

Behavior can be a form of communication. Some behaviors communicate a need or desire to access something, and others communicate wanting to escape or avoid something. Once you start to figure out what behaviors are communicating, you can plan for what to do next. This session will focus on how professionals can work with families, caregivers, and autistic people to better understand what behaviors are communicating.

12:30 - 12:45 pm CT

Break

12:45 - 2:00 pm CT

Stephen Shore, EdD  
Arielle Speer, LICSW  
Kris Guin  
Nicole Noblet

^ **Listen to the Spectrum: See Possibilities in All Abilities**

Gain insight and greater understanding by listening to a panel of autistic adults who will share their perspectives and what it really means to listen to, support and authentically engage autistic people.

2:00 - 3:00 pm CT

Jamie Scaccia, PsyD

^ **Autism and Trauma**

Autistic people may be more likely to experience traumatic life events and trauma may express itself differently in people on the spectrum. However, the overlap between autism spectrum disorder and complex trauma is significant, making it difficult to identify, resolve, and treat. It is important to understand the influence of trauma on behavior, how to recognize trauma in autistic people and how trauma may over or under shadow diagnosis.

3:00 - 3:15 pm CT

Kristin Sohl, MD

Closing Remarks