

NEWS

Takeaways from IMFAR 2016

BY CLAIRE CAMERON

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Out of the incredible diversity of research presented last week at this year's **International Meeting for Autism Research** (IMFAR) in Baltimore, a few themes emerged. One of these was the push for **more accurate** and inclusive diagnostic measures, with sessions geared toward expanding access to screening and diagnostic **testing among minorities** and **girls**, and in **developing countries**.

Another theme was the leap forward in technology **for screening**, diagnosis and **support services**. The technology demonstration session was smaller than in previous years, according to **Fred Shic** of the Yale Child Study Center. Instead, these tools and their applications ended up in the many panel discussions — something that Shic says reflects expanding acknowledgement of the value of technology for autism research and services.

The large number of advocates, families and self-advocates at the conference underscored a third thread: Including **people with autism, families and advocates** in conversations about the fundamental science of autism and related syndromes is a high priority for many researchers. On Thursday, *Spectrum* hosted a Twitter chat using the hashtag **#IMFARChat**. When asked what participants wanted to see more of at IMFAR in 2017, almost all of them said they wanted more presentations exploring clinical applications of research, and potential therapies and support tools for people with autism.

Joseph Piven, Thomas E. Castelloe Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, agreed. "As a research society, we need to find ways to bridge these gaps so that ultimately the meeting represents a full integration of the full range of important research in the field," he says.

For all attendees, the conference represented an opportunity to meet old friends and collaborators, strike up conversations about **emerging trends in autism research**, and bring fresh ideas to the table.

For more reports from the 2016 International Meeting for Autism Research, please [click here](#).