Dear collaborators,

Three months into the new year, and a lot of news from all sites – this is exciting! I have again the pleasure of sharing with all of you the reports from the seven sites we’ve had, plus a new one – welcome to Ferdinando Suvini and his team who will be overseeing recruitment in Italy! The reports speak of successes in getting funding; of successes, drawbacks, and lessons learnt in recruiting participants; and of attention received in the scientific community as well as in the general public. All of these are important for the success of the project.

We are happy to have recruited our first participants - 15 families, of which 4 did not meet the selection criteria after assessment. Music therapy and parent counselling sessions have started in earnest, and it’s great to be working with children and families again after a break from clinical work following my PhD. We have recently had a little success with some funding. The music faculty has awarded us $3,000, and a philanthropic trust has awarded $2,000. There is also a private donor who is interested in giving a small amount, and so all together we have a useful contribution to our expenses.

A note on selecting participants for the study
The focus of the TIME-A study is broadly around the child’s social communication skills. The SOPs state that children should be included in the study only if their baseline assessments are as follows: they reach the ADOS cut off total for “social affect and restricted and repetitive behaviour”; and reach the cut off on two of three domains (A, B, C) of the ADI-R.
As we are recruiting children across the spectrum, including PDD-NOS, children will vary in their social communication abilities. In Australia, we have just completed our first round of Baseline Assessments. Of 15 children, 4 did not satisfy the inclusion criteria on the ADOS as they scored too highly on this play based assessment. The features of the 4 who could not be included were as follows:

- Child 1 – PDD-NOS , attending a mainstream school, high language skills, 6 years 2 months old.
- Child 2 – high language skills, 6 years old.
- Child 3 – PDD-NOS, high language skills, 4 years old.
- Child 4 – Good language skills, 5 years 9 months old.

Based on these results, it seems that the ADOS has the potential to be sensitive to social interaction skills, which is good news for our study in terms of its use as an outcome measure. However, care needs to be taken in the recruitment phase to ensure resources are not wasted on baseline assessments for children who end up being ineligible for the study. It seems that children who already have strong social interaction skills may score too highly on the ADOS.

From our experiences in Australia, we will be making some changes to our recruitment strategy. When families of children who have a diagnosis of PDD-NOS or high functioning autism (typically with strong language skills) enquire about the study or return consent forms, the site manager will ask parents some initial questions to try to get a sense of the child’s social interaction abilities. From a clinical perspective, children who already have strong social interaction skills may experience a ceiling effect. That is, any intervention is likely to make only subtle improvements on the child’s social interaction skills given their strength in this area of development.

Looking forward to seeing you all again soon.

**Grace Thompson, University of Melbourne**

In Vienna, data collection continues somewhat slowly, but steadily. We have now four participants who have completed their 12-month assessments, two more who have that 12-month time point still ahead of them, and another five who are formally enrolled but not randomised yet as they are in various stages of their baseline assessments. Elsewhere, Christian, Cochavit, Karin and I have continued our collaborative work on the Cochrane review update on music therapy for ASD which is now in its final stages with a scheduled submission date on March 31. More details will follow! I have also finally managed to continue the work on the treatment guide together with Ulla, John, and Christian; I will send a draft version of it out to review to TIME-A collaborators in April, and I’m looking forward to receiving your expert feedback! In February, I took part in a small conference in Bonn, Germany - the 6th Scientific Meeting for Autism Spectrum
Conditions (WTAS, Wissenschaftliche Tagung Autismus Spektrum). I presented a poster on the results of the Cochrane Review update, and the conference participants seemed quite interested in what we have found. Simon Baron-Cohen (Cambridge University, UK) was the conference's keynote speaker on "Why is autism more common in males?". The proceedings / book of abstracts (partly German, partly English) can be downloaded at http://www.wgas-autismus.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=70&Itemid=86&lang=en.

Monika Geretsegger, Aalborg University/University of Vienna

In this recent months, it was obtained a scholarship for doctoral student Alexandre Mauat da Silva that is one of contributors to the research in Brazil. Furthermore, the research ethics committee has not approved the first version of the project and a new version is in process. Furthermore, the research team is studying the Standard Operating Procedures and the Open Clinica manual while a new version of the research project is in process. Currently, we are seeking contact with professionals that are performing validation ADOS in Brazil. However, so far we have not had any formal return. The team decided not to use softwares within the application of improvisational music therapy not to bring any bias to search. The initial plan was to use a software to transform notes of a keyboards in colors in the screen of a computer.

Gustavo Gattino, Universidade, Federal do Rio Grande do Sul

Israel has received ethical approval; however before we could begin recruiting our participants we needed the ADOS kit. This was a very big obstacle as we found out that at this point of time we could not purchase it because of issues with the national distributor. We finally found a research center who very kindly agreed to lend us their kit. We have found two people who can perform the ADOS for research purposes. Recruitment - A couple of days ago we published our first advertisement in central Israel (different internet Forums) regarding the research and received about 10 interested families. We are about to begin meeting each family. For now we are beginning the project in a private clinic and hope we can eventually hook up to Soroka hospital in Beer Sheva.

Several master students have joined this project and will analyze videos for vocalization and development of movement. In addition, the head of the Occupational therapy department at Haifa University is interested to look at sensory aspects in relation to the children and the two of us will travel to Germany next month to discuss this with Karin Schumacher. I was also approached by a
clinical psychologist who is also a musician and he is interested in writing his PhD. One of the ideas was to compare the ADOS with the parents SRS. Things are moving very fast these days and I hope Tali Gottfried and I will be able to handle the big interest (on all levels) here in Israel.

**Cochavit Elefant, University of Haifa**

Our group is formed by Filippo Muratori (MD), Raffaella Tancredi (MD), Roberta Igliozzi (PhD) and Ferdinando Suvini (MT). We have done an intensive work during these months as far as patients recruitment and selection of expert musicotherapists are regarded. We are now ready to begin assessments for the enrollment of patients and we have hypothesized to begin to apply MT after summertime to avoid prolonged interruptions due to the fact that in Italy summer holidays are often too protracted. We have planned to enrol 48 preschoolers among patients arriving at the Stella Maris for clinical evaluation.

**Ferdinando Suvini, IRCCS Fondazione Stella Maris**

In Korea, I have been coordinating and collaborating with two institutions regarding TIME-A projects: Family Love Music Therapy Center and Rudolf Child Development Center for ASD and Developmental Disorders. Almost all relevant psychological and developmental assessments are carried out at Rudolf (where research level of ADOS assessors are) located in GangBuk area in Seoul, while parent counseling and music therapy are carried out at FLMTC located in GangNam, Seoul, Korea. The great distance between Rudolf and FLMTC has been an issue as well as the possibility of being assigned to high intensity condition. Almost every parent finds it very hard to accommodate the high intensity condition to their daily routine due to the fact that pre-school children with ASD in Korea follow several educational and therapy programme simultaneously.

Moreover, it has not been easy for me to carry out the TIME-A with these two institutions and participating children/ parents since I do not work where therapy takes place and live quite far away in a different city. There has been some miscommunication and mishaps with these institutions. One of the biggest mishaps is the delays in 2 month assessment with the first three children. From the beginning, I explained fully the total treatment design to everybody in participating institutions, and also informed the forthcoming 2 months of assessment to the Rudolf Center in advance. When it came to conduct the 2 month assessment, the Rudolf center was
already packed with ADOS assessment schedules for the following three months/they had also their own priorities with their own research project. In order to come up with some solution, Dr. Ko (research level of ADOS assessor and the director of the Rudolf) offered her time for the ADOS assessment if the children from the TIME-A could visit her in the morning, but the children had their own busy schedule packed with other activities. The only time we could find was almost a month later. I’ve devised solution by appointing one person in each institution to take care of each child’s treatment schedule in advance, and checking it by myself.

So far we had seven children being enrolled to the TIME-A programme, and two more children are waiting to be randomized. Among these seven children, one dropped-out immediately after being assigned to the high intensity music therapy condition (three-times a week) and recently another child, who has been assigned to low intensity music therapy condition, is out of reach (the mother hasn’t been answering the call). Therefore there are five children (three in the controlled group and 1 in low intensity and another in high intensity condition) in the TIME-A programme. Apparently almost all participating children were either a child with high functioning autism, or Asperger’s. Three children will complete five months of music therapy/conselling sessions in mid-April. On the 8th of March, I had the first music therapy supervision with four participating music therapists (currently only two of them working with TIME-A kids) with DVD recorded session viewing. Two children who are currently in music therapy are developing very well with their therapists, which I plan to show the session DVDs in the next TIME – A meeting with enthusiasm and eagerness.

Jinah Kim, Jeonju University

We have established a network of music therapists, psychologists and administrative personal that will collaborate on the TIME-A project in Norway. On clinical site, psychologists at Haukeland Universiy Hospital will be conducting the outcome assessment. The music therapy will be mainly conducted by music therapists affiliated with the Culture School and Specialised Pedagogic Centres in Bergen. The Culture School is also supporting the project with free music therapy places for some participants in the experimental group. Having all this in place, we are now waiting for the ethic approval of our TIME-A/Norway leaflet that Rune Rolvsjord has created for us and will start recruitment after Easter. Concerning our predictor study "Shared moments", we are currently in the pilot phase testing whether our planned research procedures regarding the video analysis are feasible. After Easter we will start analysing TIME-A video material from Austria and soon we will need more material from other sites. For this project we have also submitted a grant application to the Norwegian
Research Council in February. We will be notified about the outcome of this grant application in June.

Karin Mössler, GAMUT, Uni Health, Bergen

Hello all! We at the Rebecca Center at Molloy College have recently just finished up our five month treatment and testing in late February. Unfortunately, because it took some time replacing our psychologist, it has pushed us back in terms of running the next cycle of randomization. Thus, we have decided not to run the study into and through the summer months due to families and staff going on vacations, and will restart the process in late August. On another note, our study has generated much interest throughout the community and has received some media attention which has helped expand our waiting list of participants to about 30 participants. We hope that the interest will remain until late August. I look forward to seeing you all in Norway come August!

John Carpente, Molloy College, Rockville Centre, NY

News from the central office:

Recruitment and data management: A total of 38 eligible participants have been randomized (Australia 11, Austria 7, Korea 9, USA 11), and we have completely switched to using OpenClinica. Several documents to help with trial management have been developed and are available in the shared dropbox folder: Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs); Manual for use of OpenClinica; and updated study logo.

Upcoming meetings: Several of you have mentioned the meeting and conference in August. As you know, we have successfully submitted an abstract for a 3-hour symposium at the EMTC conference, with contributions from all sites, and are waiting to hear from the scientific committee. The ‘internal’ TIME-A meeting will, as you know, take place immediately before that. Arrival in Bergen during Sunday, August 4th, then two days in Bergen, plus another day with possibilities for informal talks on the train to Oslo on Wednesday. The contents will be flexible and responsive to your needs, so please let us know what you need to discuss!

Some of us will also meet (and present) at the Autism Europe International Congress in Budapest, Hungary, from 26-28 September. Karin, Lucy, Monika and myself will be there, as well as Wolfgang Schmid (Norway) and Carolin Steidl (Austria) – anyone else? In addition, I hear of many
other meetings, for example several ones in Berlin lately (where Karin Schumacher and her team are involved through the “Shared moments” project mentioned by Karin), and of course in Aalborg for those linked to the PhD programme.

We have however not had any online meetings since last autumn. My impression is that there is less need for online meetings than we may have expected, because technicalities are solved efficiently by email, and more conceptual discussions are more efficiently discussed in personal meetings. Let me know however if this impression is incorrect, then we will happily arrange an online meeting again.

**Grant applications and media attention:** The team in Bergen and I have taken part in writing two rather big grant applications: one to the Research Council of Norway (led by Karin, mentioned by her above) and one to the UK National Institute for Health Research (NIHR, led by Mike Crawford). We are looking forward to hear about the outcome. In addition, I was involved in an interview for an interesting media report in the US (mentioned by John above). I am sure the title that the journalists chose for the report (as well as the lovely picture) contributed to pushing recruitment there. See an excerpt here:


**Other news:** The last, and best, news is that we are expecting the first TIME-A baby very soon. Lucy will be on maternity leave from May 13\textsuperscript{th} for about half a year. We wish her all the best and look forward to see the first pictures.

Many thanks to all of you for helping to put together this newsletter and for your continued enthusiasm!

Best wishes

Christian Gold