

Student Research Seminars

THURSDAY 4th May 2006
13:00 – 14:00

SEERC Seminar Room
SEERC Bldg

“Autism, Cognitive Development and Gastrointestinal Symptoms”

by

Sofia Dimopoulou
PhD Candidate

ABSTRACT

According to previous studies, even many children as young as 3 and 4 years of age have a rudimentary understanding of contamination in that recognize that a substance that looks edible can be harmful in reality. However, research so far has been limited to typically developing children. Little is known, for example, about the ability of children with autism to understand the nature of contamination even though substantial numbers of children with autism face gastrointestinal problems that may be more severe than those of typically developing children. The aim of the current study is to investigate the ability of children with autism to judge the goodness of food and the relation between contamination sensitivity in autism with gastrointestinal symptoms. The sample will consist of four groups: the first group will include children with autism aged between 6 to 12 years old, have been identified using the ADOS- G methodology, the second group will include typically developing children aged between 6 to 12 years old, the third group will involve typically developing children aged between 3 to 5 years old, and the fourth group will include children with learning disabilities aged between 6 to 12 years old. The participants will be asked to select of two glasses of juice, one of which had been in contact with contaminated substance that has since been removed making the juice visibly no different than that in the glass which had not been in contact with a contaminant. It is expected that children with autism will be more likely than the children in other groups to indicate that the juice from the glass that has been previously contaminated is fine to drink, and that children's indications that the juice is drinkable can be seen in terms of the extent to which they display gastrointestinal symptoms, The findings of the study will be discussed in terms of cognitive deficits in autism.

The seminar series is open to all members of staff and students of CITY and to public who wish to attend.