

AIR-P LEND Seminar Series: Community-based Lifestyle Interventions

Purpose: This document corresponds with the Community-based Lifestyle Interventions video in the AIR-P LEND Seminar Series. It outlines the video’s content and provides suggestions on how to use this resource.

Research Node: Community-based Lifestyle Interventions

Summary: With a growing body of evidence supporting the disparities faced by autistic youth across a spectrum of chronic diseases as well as quality-of-life related lifestyle behaviors, researchers must actively engage and collaborate with autistic individuals and their caregivers to inform the relevancy of interventions, targeted outcomes, and research design. When considering lifestyle-based interventions, unique considerations that consider the neurodiversity of autistic individuals pose both an opportunity and a challenge in creative design that serves a spectrum of individual wants and needs. This session will focus on a summary of the Community-Based Lifestyle Interventions Node of the AIR-P and the importance of ongoing innovation in fostering community spaces that promote the health and well-being of autistic individuals and their families.

Learning objectives:

- Describe current knowledge and research gaps around physical health and lifestyle interventions for autistic individuals.
- Propose research outcomes of interest when talking about community-based lifestyle interventions for autistic individuals.
- Describing “community” and resources as it pertains to autistic individuals/their families and leveraging them in healthful behaviors.

Outline:

Section of Video	Content Outline & Talking Points	Presenter(s)	Time allotted*
General Overview	1. Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Introduction of node leaders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Priyanka Fernandes is a preventative medicine doctor at UCLA. She is a brown woman with black hair. ii. Candace Gragnani is also a preventative medicine doctor at UCLA. She is a white woman with dark brown hair. 2. Context on AIR-P	Presenter (Node Leader): Priyanka Fernandes, MBBS, MPH, UCLA; AIR-P Node Leader Candace Gragnani, MD, MPH, UCLA ; AIR-P Node Leader	2-5 min

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Autism Intervention Research Network on Physical Health AIR-P Network (ucla.edu) b. AUCD - Autism Intervention Research Network on Physical Health (AIR-P) <p>3. This video focuses on AIR-P’s Community-based Lifestyle Interventions Research Node. This node pursues interventions that use the local autistic community’s input to guide the development and implementations of interventions aimed at improving the lifestyle of autistic individuals and their families. This video has the following learning objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Describe current knowledge and research gaps around physical health and lifestyle interventions for autistic individuals b. Propose research outcomes of interest when talking about community-based lifestyle interventions for autistic individuals c. Describing “community” and resources as it pertains to autistic individuals/their families, and leveraging them in healthful behaviors 		
<p>How is AIR-P addressing research gaps in this node?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Current base of knowledge and gaps in the research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Autistic adults have higher incidence of many chronic conditions. b. Lifestyle medicine tries to address lifestyle choices that increase the risk of chronic diseases. There are six pillars of health: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Whole food, plant-based nutrition ii. Physical activity iii. Stress management iv. Avoidance of risky substances v. Restorative sleep vi. Social connectedness 2. The community-based lifestyle intervention node is working to build evidence of the effectiveness of using spaces and support systems outside of the clinical setting. 3. In this work, it is critical to collaborate with autistic individuals to better understand how autistic individuals think about social connectedness and community. 	<p><u>Presenter (Node leader):</u></p> <p>Priyanka Fernandes, MBBS, MPH, UCLA; AIR-P Node Leader</p> <p>Candace Gragnani, MD, MPH, UCLA ; AIR-P Node Leader</p>	<p>3-5 min</p>
<p>Panel Discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introductions 2. Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What are the lifestyle issues that you think should be prioritized by those working to develop community-based lifestyle interventions for use with autistic individuals? 	<p><u>Facilitator (CRE lead/co-leads):</u></p> <p>Constance Smith-Hicks, MD, PhD; Kennedy Krieger Institute</p>	<p>25-35 min</p>

	<p>b. Approaching this from a research perspective, what are appropriate targets for community-based lifestyle interventions? How do we measure outcomes of interventions and how do we decide if it's a "better" quality of life? Who makes that decision?</p> <p>3. Panelist Talking Points:</p> <p>a. Individualized strategies and supports critical. There is no one-size-fits-all solutions, but there are ways to help autistic individuals and their families figure out what works for them.</p> <p>b. Physical health priorities should focus on sensory processing/integration, exercise, and nutrition. Uncovering and understanding individual sensitivities can help with navigating daily activities and improve quality of life.</p> <p>c. Helpful measures for quality of life can include but are not limited to: individual and caregiver stress reduction (less frequent meltdowns, shorter meltdowns), increased use of effective coping skills, improved sleep, improved GI health. Measures should be relative to the person and understand the setting in which outcomes occur.</p> <p>d. Flexibility and reasonable expectations are crucial. Research plans should be designed with these in mind.</p> <p>e. Being autistic is just a different way of being normal. Atypical development is not always problematic.</p>	<p><u>Panel (self-advocate/lived experience, caregiver experience, professional experience/node leader):</u></p> <p>Heather Brown, PhD, Autistic Researcher, Co-Chair of the Autistic Research Review Board (ARRB), caregiver of a neurodivergent son</p> <p>Candace Gragnani, MD, MPH; UCLA, AIR-P Community-based lifestyle interventions node leader</p> <p>Vanessa Seely, PharmD, Caregiver of autistic twins</p>	
Closing out remarks for learners	1. Closing remarks	Priyanka Fernandes, MBBS, MPH; UCLA, AIR-P Node Leader	

Tips to Use this Resource:

- Consider having your LEND trainees complete an asset map of local community-based resources for autistic youth and caregivers.
- Select a peer-reviewed article on a community-based lifestyle intervention for autistic youth and critically discuss its design, strengths, limitations, and recommendations on how to improve the research design.
- Hold a family advocate session to see what local barriers and assets exist within the community(ies) where you work and serve autistic individuals and families.

- Recruit a local content expert to be present when you expect to review this video. This local content expert may help facilitate your seminar and address how the topic can be applied locally at your LEND. Schedule them now to be sure they are available to attend your seminar!

Sample discussion questions:

1. How do you think community spaces can be better designed or utilized to promote health and well-being in autistic youth?
2. What role do you think healthcare providers serve in promoting or supporting community-based interventions designed for autistic individuals?
3. What role do you think local governments serve in promoting or supporting community-based interventions designed for autistic individuals?
4. Which three lifestyle-related activities do you think should be prioritized in this field of research and why?

Contextual articles:

- Candace M. Gragnani, Priyanka Fernandes; Promoting Healthy Lifestyles and Well-Being in Autistic Youth. *Pediatrics* March 2022; 149 (Supplement 4): e2020049437H. 10.1542/peds.2020-049437H <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-049437H>
- McCoy, S. M., & Morgan, K. (2020). Obesity, physical activity, and sedentary behaviors in adolescents with autism spectrum disorder compared with typically developing peers. *Autism*, 24(2), 387–399. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361319861579>
- Croen, L. A., Zerbo, O., Qian, Y., Massolo, M. L., Rich, S., Sidney, S., & Kripke, C. (2015). The health status of adults on the autism spectrum. *Autism*, 19(7), 814–823. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361315577517>