

## Improving Access for Autism in Toddlers with a New Level-2 interactive Screening Test, the RITA-T (Rapid Interactive Screening Test for Autism in Toddlers)



At UMass Medical School in Worcester and part of the Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics Division, we have been developing and testing the RITA-T as a new Level 2 screening measure in a two-level screening model to improve access in toddlers with high risk of ASD. The RITA-T can be used alone or following a Level 1 screening measure such as the MCHAT-R (Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers- Revised).

Examples of children at risk include: siblings of a child already diagnosed with ASD, children born with higher risk for neurodevelopmental disorders, such as prematurely born children, children already identified with other delays or enrolled in Early Intervention Programs, or with genetic disorders known to be associated with ASD.

This test can be administered and scored within 10 minutes and can identify children at elevated risk for ASD, potentially to refer them more rapidly and confidently for clinically conclusive ASD evaluation. We have completed a study with the THOM Early Intervention program in Worcester, MA, and that showed that toddlers through this system were evaluated for diagnosis within 6 weeks and that diagnosis of ASD correlated strongly with RITA-T results.

We continue our project with THOM and have been training pediatric practices, other early intervention programs and high-risk clinics. The RITA-T has been validated in 18 to 36 month- old toddlers and administration of the test following training is generalizable. The results of the test support correlation with clinical diagnoses, and a project to evaluate the effectiveness in those 12 to 18 months is underway.

Visit our website [www.umassmed.edu/AutismRITA-T](http://www.umassmed.edu/AutismRITA-T) and contact for [Roula Choueiri](#) more information.