

# Research Developments

MayInstitute  
Shaping Futures. Changing Lives.

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## May Interns Present Research Projects

Each year, fifth-year graduate students from colleges and universities across the country participate in May Institute's Pre-Doctoral Internship Program in Clinical Psychology. Interns conduct a single case research project which they present to internship faculty and supervisors. Many of these projects are subsequently prepared for publication or presentation at a professional conference. This year's interns and their completed studies include:

- Robin Codding, Ph.D. (Syracuse University): "Utility of Descriptive Assessment to Identify Function of Problem Behavior in a Natural Setting."
- Adam Feinberg, Ph.D. (Lehigh University): "The Effectiveness of Two Types of Stimulus Fading Procedures to Increase Communication of a Kindergarten Student With Selective Mutism."
- Shannon Kay, Ph.D. (University of Massachusetts): "Looking Good: Reducing Drooling and Improving Eating Skills."
- Jennifer Leigh, Ph.D. (University of Massachusetts): "Exposure and Response Prevention for the Treatment of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder."
- Renee Lindsay, M.A. (University of South Carolina): "Use of a Changing Criterion Design in the Treatment of a 6-Year-Old Girl With Selective Mutism."

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## Anger Management Training With Adolescents

Can short-term anger management training be effective with adolescent students who have chronic discipline problems in school? The outcome from such intervention may be minimal, as reported in a study supervised by Angie M. Trzepacz, Ph.D., of May Counseling Center. Eight students from 15-19 years old participated in an abbreviated, 11-week training program that targeted self-control, self-monitoring, and problem-solving abilities. The program was administered at school with the objective of teaching the students better conflict resolution with teachers and peers.

Before and after training, students and teachers completed several behavior-rating checklists, and the resulting data were used to evaluate program effectiveness. Although some students reported less anger during training sessions, there was no significant clinical improvement that occurred in "real life" situations or that was reported by teachers. The study offered several recommendations to enhance the effects from time-limited, school-based counseling, including scheduling training sessions more frequently and throughout the school year, establishing groups with same gender students, and collaborating with students and teachers to ensure that skills acquired during sessions can be supported in the classroom. (See "Recent Publications" section for publication citation.)



May Psychologist Angie M. Trzepacz, Ph.D., supervised the Institute's recent adolescent anger management study.

## Research in Behavioral Psychopharmacology

Two recent studies conducted at the May Centers for Adult Services in Mashpee and Revere, Mass., evaluated the contribution of psychopharmacologic intervention to comprehensive behavior support of adults with developmental disabilities. These studies demonstrated how properly selected medications, when prescribed in concert with systematic behavior support plans, can overcome high-risk clinical disorders and improve quality of life.

One study concerned Jane, a 27-year-old woman, who had mental retardation, autism, and obsessive compulsive disorder. She lived in a community-based group home and attended a day habilitation program. Jane exhibited serious behavior "outbursts" which included self-injury, disrobing, loud vocalizing, and public urinating. May staff had implemented many behavior support plans with her, but none produced a lasting positive outcome. Psychopharmacologic intervention consisted of the antidepressant medication paroxetine (Paxil®), administered initially at 10 mg per day and adjusted to an upper dosage of 20 mg per day. The addition of medication to an ongoing

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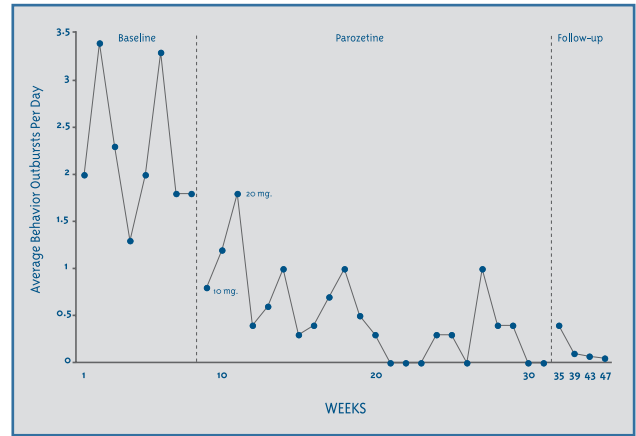
## Recent Publications

- Trzepacz, A. M., Vieira, A., & Luiselli, J. K. (2002). "Evaluation of Short-Term Cognitive-Behavioral Anger Management Training With Adolescents in a School Setting." *Journal of Brief Therapy*, 2, 53-61.
- Sperry, J. M., Luiselli, J. K., Hauser, M. J., Magee, C., & Magnifico, M. (2003). "Treatment Effects of Paroxetine on Disruptive and Self-Harming Behaviors Associated With Polyuria in an Adult With Mental Retardation, Autism, and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder." *NADD Bulletin*, 6, 47-52.
- Eshbaugh, B., Martin, W., Cunningham, K., & Luiselli, J. K. (in press). "Evaluation of a Bedtime Medication Regimen on Daytime Sleep and Challenging Behaviors of an Adult With Mental Retardation." *Mental Health Aspects of Developmental Disabilities*.
- Luiselli, J.K., Pace, G., & Dunn, E.K. (2003). "Antecedent Analysis of Therapeutic Restraint in Children and Adolescents With Acquired Brain Injury: A Descriptive Study of Four Cases." *Brain Injury*, 17, 255-264.

## Behavioral Psychopharmacology ... continued from front

behavior support plan resulted in a progressive decrease, and eventual elimination, of outbursts. (See "Recent Publications" section for publication citation.)

In the second study, Alan, a 32-year-old man with mental retardation, autism, and an anxiety disorder, engaged in aggression and self-injury within his community-based day habilitation program and group home. He also slept poorly during the evening and frequently fell asleep during the day unless closely monitored by staff. Medication in this case focused on improving his evening sleep as a strategy to reduce daytime somnolence and challenging behaviors. He was given 50 mg of trazodone (Desyre<sup>®</sup>) at bedtime, and within one month, the frequency of aggression and self-injury decreased significantly, and daytime sleep was essentially eliminated. The effects of medication were lasting and were also associated with enhanced mood and activity engagement. (See "Recent Publications" section for publication citation.)



## Intern Research ... continued from front

- Glenn Masse, M.S., M.A. (Northeastern University): "Multi-Phase Cumulative Treatment of Delayed Sleep Onset in an 11-Year-Old Boy."
- Lori McCann-Sawyer, Ph.D. (Lehigh University): "Teaching Sharing Behavior to a Child With Autism in an Integrated Preschool Classroom."
- Latha Soorya, M.A. (State University of New York at Binghamton): "Utility of Descriptive Assessments in Implementing Functional Communication Training: A Case Study."
- Leslie Sutro, Ph.D. (Tulane University): "Using Video Technology to Teach Gross Motor Imitation."

## ABOUT MAY INSTITUTE

May Institute is a private, nonprofit organization committed to providing the highest standard of behavioral healthcare, educational, and rehabilitative services. Featured in the book "In Search of America's Best Nonprofits," (Jossey-Bass, 1997), May Institute operates 180 service locations nationwide, serving nearly 20,000 individuals and families each year. An active center of research and training, we maintain affiliations with 39 universities, hospitals, and agencies worldwide, and have a Professional Advisory Board comprised of leading authorities in the field.

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