

Marshalyn Yeargin-Allsopp, M.D.

M.I.N.D. Institute Distinguished Lecturer Series –March 11, 2009

Biographical Information

Marshalyn Yeargin-Allsopp, M.D. is a medical epidemiologist and Chief, Developmental Disabilities Branch; National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Dr. Yeargin-Allsopp received her B.A. degree in biology from Sweet Briar College and M.D. degree from Emory University. Dr. Yeargin-Allsopp joined CDC in 1981 as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer and completed a Preventive Medicine Residency in 1984. Since coming to CDC, she has designed and implemented the first U.S. population-based study of developmental disabilities in school-age children in an urban area. It has served as the basis for a CDC population-based developmental disabilities surveillance system, the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) network and a CDC epidemiologic research study, Centers for Autism and Developmental Disabilities Research and Epidemiology (CADDRE). Dr. Yeargin-Allsopp is an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the Emory University School of Medicine; she was one of the original members of the State of Georgia Interagency Coordinating Council for Early Intervention Services (for children from birth- 2 years) and is the medical director of the Clayton County Early Intervention Program in metropolitan Atlanta. She is a past member of the Scientific Advisory Board and Scientific Affairs Committee for *Autism Speaks* and a past member of the Medical Advisory Board for the NIH-funded CPEA and STAART (Autism) Centers. She was the 2006 recipient of the C. Anderson Aldrich Award of the AAP Section on Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics and the 2008 recipient of the Arnold J. Capute award of the Council on Children with Disabilities of the AAP. Dr. Yeargin-Allsopp has presented internationally and published extensively on the epidemiology of developmental disabilities, including autism and cerebral palsy.

Presentation Abstracts

The epidemiology of autism: a global perspective (4 pm)

This presentation will focus on the current state of research on autism prevalence and diagnosis from a global, cross-cultural perspective. While knowledge about autism is increasing rapidly throughout the world, there are to date few scientific studies of the characteristics, prevalence and phenotypes of autism spectrum disorders outside of North America and Western Europe. Dr. Yeargin-Allsopp will illustrate how socio-cultural factors in both developed and developing countries influence autism research, especially epidemiology. Other topics include: the relationship between childhood mortality and the identification of neurodevelopmental disabilities, particularly autism; the impact of culture and ASD on screening and diagnostic tools; using schizophrenia as a model for autism research outside the US; and urban-rural and other sociodemographic risk factors for autism around the world. Understanding autism as a cultural phenomenon, and as a disability, may lead to better prevalence estimates, better services and more community inclusion of people on the autism spectrum.

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs): Perspectives on Surveillance, Research and Early Intervention (6 pm)

Dr. Yeargin-Allsopp will discuss the latest research about what autism is, how the definition has changed over time, present current autism prevalence estimates, describe what is known about who is at risk, and emphasize the importance of early identification and diagnosis. The presentation will also highlight CDC's activities in the area of autism and present a public health framework which is used to increase awareness of autism spectrum disorders, monitor its occurrence, and identify modifiable risk factors. In addition to a review of the research, Dr. Yeargin-Allsopp will explore proposed treatments for autism, help participants to sort through the myriad of options and encourage the reliance upon evidence based approaches. Understanding the importance of surveillance, research and the urgency of early identification will leave participants feeling hopeful and empowered.