



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

Children's Mental Health Task Force

Minutes

May 21, 2014

Co-chairs: Senator Dante Bartolomeo and Representative Diana Urban

Attendance: Dr. Charles Newfield, Dr. Myron Genel, Gracelyn Guyol, Dr. Charles F. Caley, Dr. Karalyn Kinsella, Tina Fox Dugdale, Chandra K. Cooper

Next meeting: June 18, 2014, 11:00 AM, Room 2A

I. Convene Meeting

Rep. Urban convened the meeting at 11:07 AM.

II. Remarks By The Chairs

Rep. Urban opened the meeting with remarks about the legislative session and her hopes moving forward. Sen. Bartolomeo announced a meeting on Public Act 13-178 (An Act Concerning The Mental, Emotional and Behavioral Health of Youths) that would give a progress report on the implementation plan created by the act. The meeting will be held on June 16, 2014 at 2:00 PM in Room 2B and she invited members to attend.

III. Presentation – Overview of Genetics of Behavioral Disorders in Children: Autistic Spectrum Disorders as a Case Study

Dr. Myron Genel introduced Dr. Abha Gupta, a professor of developmental- behavioral pediatrics at Yale School of Medicine, who has been researching the link between genetics and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Dr. Gupta gave a presentation on current data and theories related to the genetics of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Some of the information supporting a link between genetics and ASD includes studies done with twins that found 90% of identical twins share a diagnosis on the spectrum as opposed to 10-20% of fraternal twins. However, if ASD diagnosis were purely genetic, Dr. Gupta explained that the identical twins would share a diagnosis 100% of the time. Also discussed were attempts to locate a "convergence" of genes related to ASD. Now that a list of ASD linked genes has been developed in some detail, due in large part to advances in human genome mapping, attempts are being made to compare where

in the brain, and at what stage of development, these genes are "activated" in order to find some commonality between them. This convergence has been identified in layers five and six of the prefrontal and primary motor-somatosensory cortex during mid-fetal development. This discovery may allow the identification of specific causal factors for ASD based on what is happening to the brain during that developmental period and in that specific region. Dr. Gupta also presented information of the genetics based pathophysiology that is resulting in progress toward treatments in syndromes related to ASD.

Questions:

A number of questions resulted from Dr. Gupta's presentation;

- During discussion of the link between ASD and schizophrenia, Sen. Bartolomeo inquired as to whether the concept of children with ASD being "in their own world" might be connected to actual hallucinations such as sometimes experienced by individuals with schizophrenia.

Dr. Gupta replied that, while we have no way to be one hundred percent sure what children with ASD are perceiving or experiencing when they withdraw, it is not believed to be at all similar to a visual hallucination like what may be experienced by an individual with schizophrenia.

- Rep. Urban inquired as to the link between hormone disruptors/ dangerous chemicals and the mutation of genes that is linked to ASD.

Dr. Gupta replied that it is not known that chemicals are causing these mutations but it would not be surprising.

- In response to the information on the convergence of ASD linked genes, Rep. Urban asked to clarify that timing in this was critical.

Dr. Gupta responded that yes timing is critical. The basic question is could we intervene.

- Sen. Bartolomeo asked for a sense of how long it would take researchers to get more detailed answers on this subject.

Dr. Gupta believes we could see a complete list of ASD-linked genes in a few years due to large scale mapping. However, having the completed list is just the beginning.

- Rep. Urban wanted to know if the recent increases in ASD diagnosis are based on more awareness and better diagnostics or a true increase in occurrence.

Dr. Gupta agreed that much of the increase is a result of an increased awareness of ASD and also a phenomenon of reclassification in which individuals who were previously diagnosed with general or unknown intellectual disabilities are being re-diagnosed as ASD now that more is known about the disorders

IV. Focus Group Reports/Discussions:

Following the presentation and questions brief updates were given by the focus groups.

Dr. Caley, speaking for the Psychotropic Drugs group, updated the taskforce on information he is receiving from the Drug Utilization Review Board. Information has started to come in and a presentation on that information, and model legislation from other states, will likely be ready for the next meeting.

Gracelyn Guyol, speaking for the Complimentary & Alternative Treatments group, informed the task force of her plans to make executive summaries of her research and full folders on each topic that will be available to the task force members as soon as her subcommittee is done reviewing them.

Tina Fox Dugdale, speaking on behalf of the Nutrition focus group, stated that they were considering a presentation by IOL. A request was made to include prenatal nutrition in the presentation.

V. Other Business

None

VI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 12:31 PM. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, June 18, 2014 at 11:00 AM in Room 2A.