

York U professor to head new autism research program



In this April 4, 2012, photo, Kelly Andrus plays with her son Bradley, in his classroom at Children's Choice Learning Centers Inc., in Lewisville, Texas. Bradley, who turns three in a couple of weeks, was diagnosed a year ago with mild autism. (AP / Tony Gutierrez)

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A York University professor will chair a new autism research program that will focus on the mental health challenges linked to the disorder.

The federal government announced Monday \$1 million in funding for the program over five years, which will be matched by York University and the Spectrum of Hope Autism Foundation.

Dr. John Weiss will head the program, which will examine why those with Autism Spectrum Disorders are prone to develop mental health problems.

The research team will also look at new autism treatment strategies and how stressful events, such as bullying, affect those with the disorder.

"The majority of people with autism will experience mental health problems at some point in their lives," said Weiss in a statement. "Good mental health translates into better outcomes for these individuals and for their families, and to a reduced demand on our health and social systems, which benefits all Canadians."

The Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment and Care Research Program is funded by the government in partnership with Autism Speaks Canada, the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance, NeuroDevNet, and the Sinneave Family Foundation.

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