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MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
THE CHAIM SHEBA MEDICAL CENTER  
Affiliated to the Tel-Aviv University  
Sackler School of Medicine  
TEL-HASHOMER 52621, ISRAEL



בי"ח אדמונד ולילי ספרא לילדים  
THE EDMOND AND LILY SAFRA CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL  
המכון להתפתחות הילד ע"ש וינברג  
THE WEINBERG CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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מסונף לבית הספר לרפואה ע"ש סאקלר  
באוניברסיטת תל-אביב  
תל-השומר 52621, ישראל



## **KESHET CENTER for research and treatment of language, communication and autism spectrum disorders**

### **Programs at the Weinberg Child Development Center, 2007-8**

The Weinberg Child Development Center, SHEBA Medical Center, Israel, offers multidisciplinary evaluation and treatment for children with developmental disabilities from neonates through adolescence. Annually, about 1000 new children are evaluated in the center, and approximately 10,000 treatments are provided by our professional team which includes pediatricians specializing in development, neurologist, psychiatrist, orthopedist, psychologists, social workers, occupational, physical, speech, movement and music therapists. Autism and language disorders are a major interest of our team – research as well as comprehensive evaluation and treatment, are all part of our center's main goals.

All programs at the center are "family-centered" and provide services and support to the child, parents, siblings and grandparents. The team is multidisciplinary and the combined effort is tailored according to child's abilities and strengths, in order to improve communication, social adjustment and independence. The team receives continuous training and also serves as an educational and resource center for parents and for other treatment centers in the community.

## **Special clinics**

Keshet (Rainbow) Center, established in 2002, provides evaluation and intervention for children and adolescents with communication disorders (severe language impairment; Pervasive Developmental Disorders-PDD; Autism, Asperger's). Children are referred to the clinic by all HMOs, Well-Baby Clinics, pediatricians, community services, educational, psychological and social services. The professional multidisciplinary team offers extensive evaluation procedure, treatments tailored to the needs of the child and medical follow-ups as required.

## **Educational and day-care units**

**Keshet day-care class** – For children under three years old with communication disorders (severe language impairment; Pervasive Developmental Disorders-PDD; Autism, Asperger's) - 8 children per year, annual program, 6 days per week

**A Diagnostic Kindergarten** – For children above three years old with communication disorders- 8 children per year, annual program, 6 days per week

**A Therapeutic Kindergarten**- Three years program for children with a diagnosis of autism- 8 children per year, annual program, 6 days per week

### **Children attending these units receive**

- **Medical supervision**

- **Individual therapies:**

  - Psychological and psychosocial treatments and guidance**

  - Occupational therapy**

  - Speech therapy**

  - Music, movement or play therapy**

  - Hydrotherapy**

- **Group therapies and support groups for parents**

- **Regular educational contents, age and level-appropriate**

## **Integrative family centered ambulatory program**

A day-care unit for children with PDD - A multidisciplinary treatment program for children above one year old with communication disorders that attend regular education or do not receive special treatments as part of their educational program. The center provides intensive one-and-a-half days of individual and group therapies to the children provided by a comprehensive team of physicians, psychologists, speech, occupational, movement, music and play therapies. The program is designed specifically to provide the particular program that fits the family and child. In addition, the accompanying parent benefits from guidance and support given by the psychosocial team of the center.

The team works in full coordination and adjusts the program to child's achievements and needs. All professionals are qualified in specific treatments for children with PDD, such as ABA, TEACCH, Greenshpan, SI, etc.

The day-care unit provides an intensive educational-therapeutic environment that integrates with child and family's regular activities.

## **Teaching and education programs for children, families and staff:**

A new "evening school" for children, families and staff was initiated in order to promote knowledge and expertise in the area of developmental disabilities in general and communication disorders specifically.

The center provides:

- Professional courses for the special kindergarten teachers and staff. Courses are aimed to provide the staff working with children with communication disorders, new behavioral and educational treatment tools.
- A group for parents of children with communication disorders that provides them with professional knowledge and tools to support their disabled child.
- Special courses for staff and therapists of the center and other external units. This includes professional training programs for using gold-standard tools of evaluation and treatment in autism and communication disorders.

## **Research projects and collaborations**

Research is one of the major goals of the center. The Weinberg Child Development Center is an academic center and has appointments with Sackler School of Medicine at Tel Aviv University. Multiple research projects have been initiated and requests for research grants have been submitted in order to become Center of Excellence in research. Multicenter proposals are currently being evaluated and a collaborative research project with the Cody Center for Autism Research (NY, USA) was launched recently (Dr. Gabis has an appointment as Visiting Research Scientist with the Cody Center).

### **Ongoing research projects:**

- Psychiatric and autistic comorbidity in Fragile X Syndrome across ages. In collaboration with the parents non-profit organization at "Eytan".
- MRS Markers of Cognitive and Language Capability in Clinical Subtypes of Autism Spectrum Disorders. In collaboration with the Cody Center for Autism Research (NY, USA)
- Early Acquisition of Motor Milestones in Children with Communication Disability. Physical therapy unit at the Weinberg Child Development Center
- Autism risk factors: genetic, environmental, perinatal
- Sleep problems in children with autism: characterization and treatment
- Effectiveness of intensive intervention in young children with autism: Outcome of children participating in the special ambulatory program
- Other research projects dealing with more advanced assistive technology, in diagnoses as well as treatments of communication disorders are now in progress.

### **Annual meetings:**

As part of the inauguration of the "Keshet clinic", the center had organized the first symposium on "AUTISM along the lifespan" in February 2007. Speakers from Israel and abroad elaborated on comorbidity, treatment options and planning for the future, during the life cycle of families and their children with Autism.

Second meeting- February 27-28, 2008. The main focus of this second symposium was be "Autism Along Lifespan – New Treatment Horizons"

Third meeting- March 2009- Autism in the Mirror of Education- combined programs"

### **Required budget:**

- **Fund to organize scientific meeting** - To provide lodging and travel expenses to keynote speakers from abroad, plan and organize meeting logistics (including marketing, supplies, administration etc.)
- **Professionals employment** – Occupational therapists, Speech therapists, Psychologists, Psychiatrist, Music therapists, Movement therapists, Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapists, Developmental, Individual-Difference, Relationship-Based (DIR)/Floortime therapists, Hydro-therapists.
- **Treatments fund** – To provide free of charge therapies and interventions to children and adolescents diagnosed with Autism/PDD, living in low-income families.
- **Equipment** – Adjusting playground equipment, purchasing new therapy equipment, purchasing and installing video equipment for evaluation and treatment.
- **Building** – Expansion of the Weinberg child development center; third floor addition, and elevator.
- **Marketing and information distribution** – quarterly newsletter printing, advertisement of courses, continuing education program, support groups, new therapies, intervention groups etc.
- **Professionals training** – Providing training courses of gold-standard evaluation and treatment tools for professionals working at the Keshet center (ADOS, ADI, DIR, ABA etc.)
- **Scientific training fund** – To provide subsidized training courses of gold-standard evaluation tools (ADOS, ADI), research tools (statistics, good clinical practice), medical examination tools (MRI, MRS, EEG, ERP ETC.) for researchers working at the "Keshet" center.
- **Research grants** – To fund clinical, molecular and imaging tests, manpower, printing, mailing and other research requirements.
- **Funding for researchers' attendance in scientific meetings** - To provide financial support to researchers interested in taking part and presenting their research findings in scientific meetings focusing on the rapidly progressing investigation of Autism/PDD.