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AUTISM SCIENCE FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES 2017 RESEARCH ACCELERATOR GRANT RECIPIENTS

NEW YORK, NY (June 14, 2017) – The Autism Science Foundation, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing innovative autism research, today announced the recipients of its 2017 Research Accelerator Grants. These grants are designed to expand the scope, speed the progress, increase the efficiency, and improve final product dissemination of active autism research grants. This year's award recipients are Antoinette Sabatino DiCriscio, PhD, of the Geisinger-Bucknell Autism & Developmental Medicine Institute at Bucknell University, and John Strang, PsyD, of the Children's National Medical Center and the George Washington University School of Medicine.

"Our accelerator grants allow researchers to maximize the impact of ongoing and promising autism research," said Autism Science Foundation Chief Science Officer Alycia Halladay, PhD "By providing additional support for these important research initiatives, ASF will help scientists find answers for families more quickly and efficiently."

Dr. DiCriscio's research is focused on the pupil's response to light and other stimuli, called pupillometry, which serves as biomarker for arousal state, attention, and cognitive effort. The expansion or contraction of the pupil differs in people with autism compared to those without ASD. The magnitude of the pupil response also falls on a spectrum with some people showing a huge response and others showing a more moderate response. In this way, pupillometry could help define individuals with autism across a range of symptoms, expanding our diagnostic capability beyond a single "yes" or "no" classification. The ASF accelerator grant will enable collection of pupillometry data from a subset of participants in an existing genetic study of individuals with autism who have known *de novo* copy number variations, so that the genetic basis of pupil response can be better understood. The pupillometry data will be compared to behavioral features of ASD to directly examine its relationship to autism symptoms. Better understanding of this biological basis of differences across behaviors in people with autism will improve diagnosis and intervention efforts, help define different subtypes of autism, and ensure each person receives the most appropriate treatment as quickly as possible.

Dr. Strang is expanding his research examining two different interventions for autism focused on social skills and executive function in middle school-aged children. The longer term post-treatment follow-up of an additional four months will enable the team to collect data on both the immediate and longer term impacts of these interventions on autistic behaviors in the classroom and allow researchers to obtain feedback from parents and individuals with ASD about their experiences and impressions. Most research projects are only funded to track post-intervention outcomes for a limited time after the study

period is over. In addition, study-based interventions are delivered in a controlled setting and generalization to other, more natural environments is typically unknown.

About the Autism Science Foundation:

The Autism Science Foundation (ASF) is a 501(c)(3) public charity. Its mission is to support autism research by providing funding to scientists and organizations conducting autism research. ASF also provides information about autism to the general public and serves to increase awareness of autism spectrum disorders and the needs of individuals and families affected by autism. To learn more about the Autism Science Foundation or to make a donation, visit www.autismsciencefoundation.org.

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