



## WVU seeking participants for autism study

November 5, 2015

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. – Researchers at West Virginia University are conducting a study to examine how individuals on the autism spectrum process what they see and hear. They are currently seeking adults with and without autism as study participants.

The primary goal of this study is to better understand how individuals with autism integrate real-world sensory information during common activities, such as watching and listening to a video.

“Sensory processing dysfunction can cause individuals with autism to have uncommon reactions to everyday sights, sounds, smells, etc. This can interfere with daily activities,” explained James Lewis, Ph.D., project principal investigator and associate professor of [neurobiology and anatomy](#) in the WVU [School of Medicine](#).

According to Paula Webster, a Ph.D. candidate working on the project, “We are using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to investigate brain areas used in auditory and visual processing and to explore the underlying structural connections supporting these brain regions.”

Participants in the study will lie in the MRI for 45 to 60 minutes and watch a video. The MRI will show researchers how the brain is processing and combining auditory and visual information. A participant must be able to hold his or her head very still, wear ear buds, and perform a simple button press task during the MRI scan. Participants are not sedated, there are no blood draws, and there is no exposure to radiation.

Adults between the ages of 18 and 28 who are not claustrophobic and have no metal in their bodies should contact: Paula Webster, WVU Department of Neurobiology and Anatomy, PO Box 9128, Morgantown, West Virginia, 26506-9128; 304.293.8227 or [pjwebster@hsc.wvu.edu](mailto:pjwebster@hsc.wvu.edu).

Participants will receive \$20 per hour for their time. Typically, more than one visit is required for the MRI and behavioral testing. A mock MRI scanner is available to help prepare potential participants for the real scan.

The study is partially funded by a pilot grant through the [West Virginia Clinical and Translational Science Institute](#) (WVCTSI), an organization funded by the [National Institutes of Health](#) (NIH) to build clinical and translational research infrastructure and capacity to impact health disparities in West Virginia.

The research described is supported by the [National Institute Of General Medical Sciences](#) of the NIH under Award Number U54GM104942. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.

WVU Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is on file.

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