

ESLA ACADEMIC RESEARCH NETWORK

Mission:

The mission of the ESLA academic research network in communication disorders is to advance the understanding, prevention, assessment, and treatment of communication disorders through collaborative and innovative research. Our aim is to improve the lives of individuals affected by communication disorders, enhance the quality of clinical practice, and contribute to the broader field of communication sciences and disorders.

Objectives:

1. **Foster Collaboration:** We strive to create a collaborative network of researchers, clinicians, educators, and stakeholders in the field of communication disorders. By promoting interdisciplinary partnerships, we aim to generate synergistic research efforts that address complex questions and challenges in communication disorders.
2. **Conduct Cutting-edge Research:** We are committed to conducting high-quality, innovative research that explores the various dimensions of communication disorders. Our focus encompasses a broad range of areas, including speech and language development, neurogenic communication disorders, voice disorders, fluency disorders, feeding and swallowing disorders and augmentative and alternative communication.
3. **Promote Evidence-based Practice:** We are dedicated to bridging the gap between research and clinical practice. By conducting rigorous studies, disseminating research findings, and providing evidence-based resources, and practice guidelines, we aim to enhance the quality of assessment and intervention services for individuals with communication disorders.
4. **Drive Knowledge Translation:** We recognize the importance of translating research findings into practical applications that can benefit individuals, families, and communities affected by communication disorders. We strive to disseminate research outcomes through publications, conferences, workshops, and online platforms, ensuring that knowledge is accessible to professionals, policymakers, and the public.
5. **Train and Mentor Future Leaders:** We are committed to nurturing the next generation of researchers, clinicians, and educators in the field of communication disorders. Through mentorship programs, training opportunities, and research collaborations, we aim to inspire and empower emerging professionals to make significant contributions to the field.
6. **Collaborate with Stakeholders:** We actively engage with stakeholders, including individuals with communication disorders, their families, advocacy groups, and policymakers. By involving them in the research process and incorporating their perspectives, we aim to ensure that our work addresses the real-world needs and challenges faced by individuals with communication disorders.
7. **Influence Policy and Practice:** We strive to inform policy development and shape clinical practice guidelines related to communication disorders. By actively engaging with policymakers, professional organizations, and regulatory bodies, we aim to promote evidence-based policies and practices that improve the identification, assessment, and intervention for individuals with communication disorders.

Through our collective efforts and a commitment to excellence, we seek to advance the understanding of communication disorders and ultimately make a positive impact on the lives of individuals affected by these conditions.

Membership:

Membership in the network involves meeting specific requirements and criteria. Following are some key criteria to consider for membership:

1. **Educational Background:** Membership in the research network often requires a relevant educational background in the field of communication disorders. This may include a doctoral degree (Ph.D., Psy.D., or equivalent) in speech-language pathology, audiology, communication sciences and disorders, or a related discipline such as linguistics. Alternatively, individuals with a master's degree or equivalent, along with a significant research track record, may also be eligible for membership.
2. **Research Experience:** A strong research background is typically expected for membership. This includes a demonstrated record of active involvement in research related to communication disorders, such as publications in peer-reviewed journals, conference presentations, and participation in research projects. The network may consider the quality, impact, and relevance of the applicant's research contributions.
3. **Collaborative Orientation:** Membership in the research network often requires a willingness to collaborate and engage in interdisciplinary research efforts. The network may value individuals who have a history of successful collaborations with researchers from diverse disciplines and who demonstrate the ability to work effectively in team-based research settings.
4. **Professional Affiliations:** Membership may require affiliation with relevant professional organizations or societies in the field of communication disorders. Active involvement in these organizations, such as holding leadership positions, participating in committees, or presenting at conferences, can strengthen an application for membership.
5. **Contributions to the Field:** Membership consideration may consider the applicant's contributions to the broader field of communication disorders. This can include involvement in professional activities, such as serving as a reviewer for scientific journals, contributing to the development of clinical practice guidelines, or engaging in advocacy efforts related to communication disorders.
6. **Letters of Recommendation:** Applicants may be required to submit letters of recommendation from established researchers or professionals in the field who can speak to the applicant's research expertise, collaborative abilities, and potential contributions to the network. Alternatively, endorsements by two academics in the field.
7. **Commitment to Ethical Conduct:** Membership in the research network typically requires adherence to ethical standards and research practices. Applicants may be evaluated based on their commitment to ethical conduct, including responsible research conduct, adherence to institutional review board protocols, and protection of participant confidentiality.
8. It's important to note that the specific requirements for membership may vary among different academic research networks in communication disorders. Prospective members should carefully review the network's guidelines and criteria to ensure their eligibility and to understand any additional requirements that may be specific to that particular network.
9. Everyone in the network will need to adhere to IPR regulations safeguarding intellectual property.

Activities

Following are some examples of key activities that network members could engage in:

1. Collaborative Research Projects: The network can initiate and support collaborative research projects among member institutions across Europe. Colleagues from institutions from outside Europe could be invited to participate if their expertise is valuable to the specific project. These projects can focus on various aspects of communication disorders. Collaborative projects can leverage the diverse expertise and resources available within the network to address complex research questions and facilitate knowledge sharing.
2. Research Workshops and Conferences: The network can organize regular workshops and conferences to promote exchange of ideas, research findings, and methodologies among researchers in the field of communication disorders. These events can provide a platform for researchers to present their work, discuss emerging trends, and foster collaborations. The network can also invite renowned experts as keynote speakers to share their insights and promote interdisciplinary discussions. These workshops will need to organize in synergy with the existing webinar series or ESLA Congresses.
3. Research Grants and Funding Opportunities: The network can actively seek funding opportunities and provide information and support to members in applying for research grants at the national, European, and international levels. The network can establish mechanisms to facilitate collaboration among members for grant applications, increasing the chances of securing funding for innovative research projects. ESLA could be included as a partner in these grants.
4. Data Sharing and Collaborative Research Databases: The network can establish protocols and infrastructure to facilitate data sharing and create collaborative research databases. Using open resources to facilitate this collaboration is now readily available to researchers. This can promote the pooling of data from different research projects and institutions, allowing researchers to access larger and more diverse datasets for their studies. Collaborative databases can also facilitate multi-site studies and increase the generalizability of research findings.
5. Training and Capacity Building: The network can organize training programs and workshops aimed at enhancing research skills and methodologies among network members. These programs can cover areas such as research design, statistical analysis, data collection techniques, and research ethics. The network can also facilitate mentorship opportunities for early-career researchers, pairing them with experienced researchers within the network.
6. Special Interest Groups: The network can establish special interest groups focused on specific areas within communication disorders, such as autism spectrum disorders, neurogenic communication disorders, voice, feeding and swallowing, or developmental language disorders. These groups can serve as platforms for focused discussions, collaborative projects, and knowledge exchange among researchers with shared interests. Care should be given not to duplicate existing networks/groups.
7. Dissemination of Research Findings: The network can develop strategies to disseminate research findings to both academic and non-academic audiences. This can include publishing research articles in high-impact journals, organizing webinars and public lectures, and developing online resources that provide evidence-based information to clinicians, educators, policymakers, and individuals and families affected by communication disorders.

8. International Collaborations: The network can actively seek opportunities for international collaborations with research networks and institutions outside of Europe. Collaborations can include joint research projects, exchange programs for researchers and students, and sharing of resources and expertise. International collaborations can enrich the research landscape, foster cross-cultural perspectives, and advance the understanding of communication disorders on a global scale.
9. Policy Advocacy: The network can advocate for evidence-based policies and practices related to communication disorders at the European and national levels. This can involve engaging with policymakers, participating in consultations, and providing expert advice to inform policy development. The network can also collaborate with professional organizations and advocacy groups to ensure that the voices and needs of individuals with communication disorders are represented in policy discussions.
10. Public Engagement and Awareness: The network can undertake initiatives to raise public awareness about communication disorders and their impact on individuals and society. This can involve organizing public events, developing educational materials, and leveraging digital platforms to disseminate accurate information about communication disorders, promote early intervention, and reduce stigma associated with these conditions.

Summary: By engaging in these activities, the European academic research network in communication disorders can foster collaboration, advance knowledge, and contribute to the improvement of assessment, intervention, and support for individuals affected by communication disorders across Europe.