

Presents

Saturday, November 9, 2013 9:00am – 4:00pm
George Mason University Prince William Verizon Auditorium

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

Rather than ushering in a new age of science, the 21st century seems to have brought an explosion of superstitious beliefs, magical thinking, and the frauds that go with them. Unconstrained by concepts such as validity, reliability, rationality, logic, evidence, or ethics, anti-science and pro-fad beliefs have proliferated in the media and internet. Even the most cursory examination of current practices shows that vast majority of autism treatments are clearly predicated on the rejection of accepted science. Even behavior analysis, as self-consciously scientific as it is, has not escaped the influence of autism pseudoscience. Having had the advantages of more than a century-and-a-half of psychological science, and centuries more of other sciences, it is no longer possible to accept that any popular notion about behavior problems or their treatment is likely to be as good as any other. To be ethical, we must be empirical. Thus, to be empirical is not just to have a practical advantage. It is a moral obligation for behavior analysts, and must extend beyond making decisions about contingencies of reinforcement to all aspects of professional behavior. After this workshop, participants will:

- *Describe some illustrative cases of current autism pseudoscience
(Facilitated Communication and related practices, in particular)
- *Describe fundamental elements of autism pseudoscience
- *Describe the difference between empirical and non-empirical or anti-empirical practices; and
- *Describe methods for avoiding becoming enmeshed in non-empirical and anti-empirical practices.

Particular attention will be paid to the methods by which pseudoscience attempts to simulate an empirical foundation, how in the absence of evidence it establishes false credibility by testimonial and appeals to emotion, and how even seasoned professionals can fall victim to unscientific practices. Through lecture, video examples and group activities, the participants will leave with a better understanding of range and types of autism pseudoscience, the practices used to promote it, and how to combat it.

ABOUT THE PRESENTER

James T. Todd, Ph.D. is Professor of Psychology at Eastern Michigan University. He earned his Ph.D. in 1990 in Developmental and Child Psychology at the University of Kansas under Edward K. Morris. He is an expert in pseudoscientific treatments for autism, particularly Facilitated Communication and Rapid Prompting. His most recent article “The Moral Obligation to Be Empirical: Comments on Boyton’s “Confessions of a Former Facilitator” was published in the summer issue of “Evidence-Based Communication Assessment and Intervention.”



BCBAs, BCABAs, and BCBA-Ds may earn 6 hours of Ethics Type II ACE at this presentation. *To register, please go to the following website: <http://kihd.gmu.edu>*