INSAR has been expanding its global reach by hosting regional IMFAR meetings in parts of the world where the annual IMFAR is not held. INSAR has now held two open invitations for proposals for these regional meetings. The first regional IMFAR, held November 6-8, 2015 in Shanghai, China, was extremely successful with over 700 attendees. The success of this conference motivated INSAR to support the second invitation for proposals, and several outstanding proposals were received. The INSAR Board of Directors is pleased to announce that the 2017 Regional IMFAR will be held on September 7-9 in Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Africa is an especially fitting choice for this year’s regional meeting. Children and adolescents in Africa are highly under-recognized, under-treated and under-researched. The ‘treatment gap’ for child and adolescent mental health and neurodevelopmental disorders is estimated to be 90%, and very little research is performed in Africa. A lack of awareness and knowledge about neurodevelopmental disorders exists at all levels of African society. Yet, the need is great given that the UN predicts that, by 2050, 40% of the world’s children and adolescents will live in Africa.

The 2017 Regional IMFAR in Africa is being led by Professor Petrus de Vries, a child and adolescent psychiatrist who has a long-standing commitment to child mental health and neurodevelopmental disorders in Africa. Dr. de Vries is also organizing the 19th SA-ACAPAP (South African Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatrists and Allied Professions) congress in partnership with the AACAMH (African Association of Child & Adolescent Mental Health). Given the importance of integrating neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism and other mental health and neurodevelopmental disabilities, the decision was made to hold the SA-ACAPAP/AACAMH congress in conjunction with the Africa Regional IMFAR meeting. The conference is expected to attract a large community of clinicians, educators, researchers and parental stakeholders who are interested in ASD and other child and adolescent mental health conditions.

Speakers at the Africa Regional IMFAR will come from all over the globe and include David Amaral, Richard Grinker, and myself from the United States, Simon Baron-Cohen from the United Kingdom, Petrus de Vries, Linda Theron, and Mark Tomlinson from South Africa, Bruno Falissard from France, Naoufel Gaddour from Tunisia, Olayinka Omigbodun from Nigeria, and Helmut Remschmidt and Christina Schwenck from Germany, among others. Topics will range from neuroscience to intervention to cultural perspectives on autism and its treatment. A range of sessions geared toward community stakeholders and scientists will be held.

The venue for the Africa Regional IMFAR will be the Spier Wine Estate and Conference Center, one of South Africa’s oldest wine farms where farm-to-table and accoladed wines will be featured. Spier has been recognized as a top international destination and is sure to offer an inspiring atmosphere for creativity and collaboration. More information can be found at this link: https://easternsun.eventsair.com/saacapap-congress-2017/saacapap-2017.

To learn more about autism spectrum disorders in Africa, I encourage you to read the comprehensive scoping review written by Franz, Chambers, von Isenburg, and de Vries, published this year in *Autism Research*1. It exciting to watch INSAR’s impact on research across the globe expand in its breadth and depth. This global focus is a vital part of INSAR’s mission to improve the lives of those affected by autism through high quality and culturally diverse research.

Sincerely,

Geraldine Dawson, PhD
President, International Society for Autism Research

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