



## EnVISIONing a Bright Future

Lemer PS. *Envisioning a Bright Future: Interventions that Work for Children and Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders*. 2008 Optometric Extension Program Foundation, Santa Ana, CA, 414 pages. ISBN-10: 0929780175, ISBN-13: 978-0929780177

Reviewed by Dr. Gary Williams, Owego, NY.

The subtitle of this book is: *Interventions that Work for Children and Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders*. It is a compendium with contributions from a long list of who's who in the diagnosis and treatment of individuals with autism. The strengths of the book are its comprehensiveness and its presentation of the author's orientation regarding autism and a number of other disorders which are:

Individuals of all ages with AD(H) D, LD, PDD and autism, and all the diagnoses in between can be viewed on a spectrum;

1. That these individuals have issues in biological areas that affect vision;
2. The concept of "total load theory," which assists in understanding such phenomenon as allergies improving after optometric vision therapy;
3. That vision influences areas such as social referencing, auditory integration and cognition;
4. Autism is more than an immutable genetic disease which lasts a lifetime; that some young children can actually recover from it, and that older individuals can improve markedly given the proper treatments.

Since there are many individual contributors there are some inconsistencies from chapter to chapter

which is inevitable in an area like this in which there are still more questions than answers. All information is presented for its potential usefulness and benefit. While we would love to have more definitive answers and guidelines for individual patients, that is not the purpose of this volume and the state of care of individuals with autism has not evolved to that level. When patients come to our offices, we need to do the best we can to help them with the current knowledge and tools. This volume provides that knowledge. While our primary role is to help develop visual skills, it is even less possible to treat vision in isolation with this population of patients than it is with our learning related vision problems or our patients with amblyopia or strabismus.

Randy Schulman has contributed two practical chapters which contain excellent clinical advice for optometrists. Also, some of the information in the chapter on communication and social-emotional

issues has direct clinical application beyond possible causes and treatments based on causality. Many people on the autism spectrum have focusing, binocular and ocular motor dysfunctions which complicate their lives and are amenable to therapy. Beyond that is the area of visual information processing and integration which is central to some aspects of autism and impairs the performance of these patients just as it does for non-autistic individuals. Some of our subconscious development is postulated to involve mirror neuron cells. This type of visual mimicry and learning is less prevalent in those on the autism spectrum. As challenging as vision therapy can be in patients without autism, the areas of communication, feeling, change, and invasion of space makes working with individuals on the autism spectrum even more challenging.

