Mission Statement: The Motor Brain and Development Lab is dedicated to advancing knowledge about motor development, brain development, and independent living skills to promote and enhance quality of life for individuals with and without developmental disorders.

A letter from Dr. Brittany Travers:

This fall marks the 3-year anniversary of the Waisman Center’s Motor & Brain Development Lab. As I reflect on these last 3 years, I am overwhelmed by gratitude to everyone who has made this lab what it is today. I am so grateful for the time and talents of all the children and teenagers who have spent countless hours with us balancing, playing computer games, drawing with a robot, and completing brain imaging scans. I am grateful for all the parents who have sat in the waiting room, filling out the multitude of forms. I am grateful for our lab’s students and staff who have passionately worked with our amazing families, problem solved inevitable technological challenges, and ensured that the research is of the highest quality. You all have such busy lives with many choices to make about how you spend your time, and I am so honored you all have chosen to spend some time with us. You have enriched our understanding of the strengths and challenges associated with autism, and it has been my genuine pleasure to get to know you. In the next few months we will be wrapping up three of our projects (with your help), and the knowledge-to-be-gained looks bright. Here’s to the next couple of years!
RESEARCH UPDATE: DOES BALANCE TRAINING HELP INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER?

One of the key questions we have been asking in our lab is whether videogame-based balance training can help improve standing balance in youth with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The results are in and will be published in the upcoming issue of the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disabilities.

Overall, we found that 6 weeks of balance training using our Ninja Training video game and the Wii Fit games significantly improved balance in the youth. Importantly, these improvements in balance even transferred to tasks outside of the game. Generally, participants perceived the training as beneficial and enjoyable, suggesting that this might be a fun way to train balance in the future!


ADDITIONAL RECENT PUBLICATIONS:


RECENT GRADUATES WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

COURTNEY ENGEL,
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FIELDWORK ROTATION - UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, OUTPATIENT PEDIATRICS CENTER ANN-ARBOR, MI

AUBREY FISHER,
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FIELDWORK ROTATION - REHAB INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO, INPATIENT SPINAL CORD INJURIES CHICAGO, IL

KRISTIN LILLIE,
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FIELDWORK ROTATION - FROEDTERT HOSPITAL, INPATIENT NEUROLOGY UNIT MILWAUKEE, WI

SAGUI LUTMAN,
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FIELDWORK ROTATION - CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL OF WISCONSIN, INPATIENT/ACUTE UNIT MILWAUKEE, WI

ROBYN GEIST,
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FIELDWORK ROTATION - COURAGE KENNY KIDS, OUTPATIENT PEDIATRICS COON RAPIDS, MN

KRISTI MCLAUGHLIN,
CURRENT MEDICAL STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA MINNEAPOLIS, MN

NICOLE MARCZAK,
CURRENT PHYSICAL THERAPY STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND PORTLAND, ME
DO YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW WANT TO HELP WITH RESEARCH?

CHILDREN AGES 6-10 YEARS:
We are recruiting children 6-10 years old with autism, ADHD, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or typical development. We hope to better understand the brain and behaviors of children with autism and autism-related disorders. Participants complete 3 hours of behavioral tasks and a one-hour MRI brain scan. All sessions will be completed at the Waisman Center. Compensation is $50/MRI and $10/hour. Please contact (608) 263-0282 or motorlab@wisc.edu for more information if interested!

ADOLESCENTS AGES 13-17 YEARS:
We are recruiting adolescents 13-17 years old with autism or with typical development for a research study that looks at brain and behavior changes after learning skills from playing videogames. Participants will complete a 1.5-2.5 hour intake assessment and a 1-hour MRI brain scan, while parents answer questions about their child. Then, they will come to the Waisman Center, three times a week over the course of six weeks to play Wii and Kinect video games. After the six weeks, participants will complete a 1-hour end-of-study assessment and another 1-hour MRI brain scan. Compensation is $50/MRI scan and $10/hour for their participation (up to $315). Please Contact (608) 263-0282 or videogametraining@waisman.wisc.edu for more information if interested!

ADOLESCENTS AGES 13-17 YEARS:
We are recruiting adolescents ages 13-17 with autism or typical development to play computer games. We hope to understand the brain, learning, and decision making of individuals. The first session will be completed at the Waisman Center and will be 30-90 minutes. Then, the following 10 sessions will be an hour per session and will take place at the Wisconsin Institutes for Medical Research to play space-themed learning and decision-making computer games. Compensation is $10/hour. Please contact (608) 263-0282 or ComputerGames@waisman.wisc.edu for more information if interested!