**Meet the SCATN Consultants spotlight...**

**Alicia V. Hall, PhD** is a licensed Psychologist, recognized by the National Register of Health Services Providers in Psychology. She received her PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of South Florida.

Dr. Hall has worked with families with Autism Spectrum Disorders since 2001. She provides diagnostic and therapeutic services (individual, family, and group therapy) in the Developmental Specialty Clinics at the South Carolina Department of Mental Health.

Dr. Hall has worked in partnership with Dr. Abramson and Dr. Wright on clinical and genetic research. As a research group, they have collaborated with researchers at the University of Miami Institute for Human Genetics, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, and the University of Colorado Medical School.

Dr. Hall has special interests in gender and forensic issues in the Autism community.

**Questions for the SCATN consultants?** You can send questions or comments via email to Elizabeth Wilkinson at [Elizabeth.Wilkinson@uscmed.sc.edu](mailto:Elizabeth.Wilkinson@uscmed.sc.edu). Questions will be distributed to consultants and responses emailed back to you.

**Of Interest in Autism...**


Sleep disturbance is a common problem among children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and other developmental disabilities. Some reports estimate that up to 89% of children with ASD and 77% of children with fragile X syndrome have sleep problems including difficulty falling asleep and frequent night awakening. Melatonin has been used for treatment of insomnias and other sleep disturbance in a wide range of individuals; however, few studies have been done to establish its safety and efficacy in children with developmental disabilities. The current paper reports on a randomized, double blind, placebo-controlled, crossover study to examine the effects of melatonin on the sleep patterns of individuals with ASD and/or fragile X syndrome. Following a one week baseline period, study participants were given either melatonin, 3mg, or placebo for two weeks and then alternated for two additional weeks. Sleep data was collected by means of an Actiwatch (a small, light-weight, wrist watch monitor) and by parent report. The conclusions of the study indicate improvement in several areas. First, children took less time to fall asleep; sleep-onset latency shorter by 28 minutes. They fell asleep earlier; mean sleep-onset time was earlier by 42 minutes with parents generally reporting less difficulty in getting the child to settle in at the beginning of the night. Finally, they slept longer; mean night sleep duration was longer on melatonin than on placebo by 21 minutes. No side effects were reported during the study period. The researchers conclude that this study supports the efficacy and tolerability of melatonin treatment for sleep problems in ASD and fragile X syndrome.

See Full Article at: [http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2670334/?tool=pubmed](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2670334/?tool=pubmed)