 

**St. Mary’s University**

**Waldegrave Road**

**TW1 4SX, Twickenham, London**

**United Kingdom**

**The Research Project**

**Gastrointestinal symptoms and anxiety levels in autism.**

**Purpose and value of study:** Autism spectrum disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder that impacts an individuals life. As autism shows symptoms of behavioural differences, anxiety has been found to be a common feature. Furthermore, gastrointestinal symptoms (e.g. abdominal pain and discomfort) might be present, which can affect their well-being and may also influence their behaviour. Therefore, the aim of the study is to investigate the nature of gastrointestinal symptoms and anxiety levels in children with autism.

**Invitation to participate:** You have been invited to participate, as your child has a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. My name is Shania Lorenz and I would like to invite you to participate, to inform my research project for my dissertation. Before you decide whether you want to participate, you will receive some information about what participating will involve for you and other questions you may have.

**Who is organising the research:** The research is organised by a third year Psychology student at St. Mary’s University in Twickenham, London. Supervision throughout the study by a supervisor is given.

**What will happen to the results of the study:** The results of the study will be analysed, written up for a third year project dissertation and safely stored. As participating is anonymous, individuals will not be able to be identified.

**Contact for further information:** If you have any questions, please feel free to contact one of the researchers of the study: Shania Lorenz 175282@live.stmarys.ac.uk; Kate Lawrence kate.lawrence@stmarys.ac.uk (Supervisor)

**Your Participation in the Research Project**

**Why you have been invited to take part:** You have been invited to participate in this research, as your child is diagnosed with autism, and may or may not show symptoms of gastrointestinal or anxiety symptoms.

**Whether you can refuse to take part:** Taking part in the study is voluntarily. You do not have to take part in the study.

**Whether you can withdraw from the project at any time, and how:** In case you did participate and would like to withdraw form the study, you are able to withdraw at any point, leading up to a week before the hand-in date for the dissertation (25.03.2020). You can withdraw by contacting one of the researcher by e-mail.

**What will happen if you agree to take part (brief description of procedures/tests):** By agreeing to participate, you will be filling in three different questionnaires. One questionnaire will ask you about your child’s behaviour and autism. Another questionnaire will ask you about your child’s experienced gastrointestinal symptoms during the past week and the last questionnaire will question your child’s experience of anxiety, or whether your child shows symptoms of anxiety.

**Whether there are any risks involved (e.g. side effects) and if so, what will be done to ensure your wellbeing/safety:** There will not be any risks involved by participating, however I acknowledge the fact that it is not easy to know that your child might experience any negative symptoms. If you feel uncomfortable by participating or after, please consider contacting one of the websites I will mention on the debrief sheet at the end of the study, which might help you to speak about your child’s symptoms.

**What will happen to any information/data/samples that are collected from you:** Once the data is collected, it will be analysed and written up to complete a third year dissertation project. The information will not be shared with anyone apart from the researcher and will be stored safely. By participating, you nor your child will be able to be identified, as all data will be anonymised throughout participation.

**Whether there are any benefits from taking part:** There are no direct benefits by participating, but you might have been unaware of your child’s experienced symptoms, which may help you to support your child to feel better. If you would like to receive more information about the symptoms your child might have, you can request a copy of the written report after submission in April. No individualised reports can be given though, as participating is anonymous.

**How much time you will need to give up to take part in the project:** If you decide to participate in the study, it will take you up to 45 minutes to complete the questionnaires with your child.

**How your participation in the project will be kept confidential:** As all data is anonymous, data will be kept confidential. The data that might identify your child will not be shared with anyone else outside the research team.

**If you are willing to participate, please click the link below:**

<https://stmarys.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/the-link-between-autism-gastrointestinal-symptoms-and-anx>