

## F/C update: critical PBS program adds to controversy

The F/C wars continue. The chasm between the believers and the skeptics was widened by the October 19 broadcast of the hour-long PBS *Frontline* show, "Prisoners of Silence," which was highly critical of F/C (a technique in which a non-disabled "facilitator" assists a disabled individual in

typing, usually by holding the disabled individual's hand or wrist).

Douglas Biklen and his supporters fired back, claiming the show was biased and had withheld positive evidence for F/C. John Palfreman, *Frontline* producer, responded by saying he had, in his words, "bent over

backward" to seek and present positive evidence for F/C, but could find none. Biklen accused *Frontline* of ignoring the work of neurologist Margaret Bauman, who has done important post-mortem studies of autistic persons. Palfreman responded that he had interviewed Dr. Bauman at length, and that she had stated that her work neither supported nor challenged the belief in F/C.

The charges and counter-charges continue to accumulate, as do the filings of F/C-based child abuse allegations against parents and professionals. Lawsuits against schools and facilitators are being filed in return by angry parents and teachers who have been accused of molestation via F/C.

The situation does not seem likely to be resolved any time soon. Meanwhile, *60 Minutes* plans to broadcast a piece on F/C, probably in mid-December. And researchers continue to complete scientifically controlled studies of F/C, almost invariably with results that cast doubt on its reality (see chart).

**New positive study:** The first study showing positive effects for all subjects was recently completed by Berger and Ramsden (#43 in table). The four subjects in this study achieved 33% to 75% correct responses in a blind test requiring them to write one-word answers to simple questions. Carol Berger asked ARRI to emphasize that the facilitated communication methods she has developed, starting in 1987, are quite different than those employed in the other studies, which show much poorer results. Berger starts by teaching her students to read, rather than simply assuming instant literacy. She then follows through by teaching them to write, with carefully planned drills and exercises, and makes sure they look at the keyboard. For information write Carol Berger, New Breakthroughs, P.O. Box 25228, Eugene, OR 97402-0447.

"Frontline" had a hard time making FC appear credible," Jon Palfreman, *Syracuse Post-Standard*, November 1, 1993.

### Controlled Evaluations of Facilitated Communication

Compiled with the assistance of Gina Green, New England Center for Autism

#### F/C Study Results (continued). TABLE IV: Update through 11/93

SOURCE	DIAGNOSIS	METHOD	F/C CONFIRMED
36. Moore, Donovan and Hudson (Australia) (JADD, 1993)	MR/CP	Facilitator-suggested, conversational, blind	0 of 5
37. Klewe (Denmark) (JADD, 1993)	MR/CP	Spelling board, picture naming, blind	0 of 13
38. Siegel (California) (JADD, in press)	autistic	Questions about likes, dislikes, foods, activities, blind	0 of 2
39. Streit (New York) (submitted for publ., JADD)	autistic	Pictures, words, blind	2 of 13
40. Simon, Toll, Whitehair (Pennsylvania) (in press, JADD)	autistic/MR/PDD	Naturalistic activities reported by F/C, blind	yes: 1 of 7 (possibly: 4 of 7)
41. Ogletree, Hamtil, Solberg, Scoby-Schmeizle (Focus on Aut. Behav., 1993)	PDD/autistic	Picture, object and activity naming, blind	0 of 1
42. Apel and Vandervelde (Washington) (ASHA conference, Nov. 1993)	autistic	Facilitator blind	0 of 4
43. Berger and Ramsden* (Oregon) (Doctoral dissertation in press)	MR/autistic CP	Multiple choice word board article/picture; identification; facilitator blind	4 of 4*

\* Differs from the F/C of Crossley/Biklen. See accompanying article.

#### SUMMARY

TOTAL	F/C CONFIRMED**	F/C FAILED
STUDIES: 43	9	34
SUBJECTS: 334	18	316

\*\* In all cases, "confirmed" indicates minimal naming responses—usually one word only

## FDA regulations: battle continues

(continued from page 1)

ments. Remember, before January 25, your legislators will be in your local area. After January 25, call the Congressional operator at (202) 224-3121 and ask for your Senator's or Representative's health affairs aide. Urge support for the moratorium, then co-sponsorship of Senate Bill 784 or House Resolutions 509 and 1709.

If you think the FDA can be trusted, think again! Here are some recent comments by Federal judges in court judgments against the FDA:

"As the FDA would have it, any element of any substance that has more than one component may be branded a food additive..."

"The only justification for this Alice in

Wonderland approach is to allow the FDA to make an end run around the statutory scheme..."

"...unwarranted since [the FDA's] interpretation is contrary to the language and intent of the Act."

"The FDA's broad definition...subverts Congressional purposes."

There is also the case of world-renowned physician Jonathan Wright, whose clinic in Kent was raided and sacked by the FDA soon after Dr. Wright sued the FDA to regain possession of his supply of tryptophan that the FDA had seized. After 18 months, the FDA has still not filed any formal charges against Dr. Wright.

—B.R.

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