

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE



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Cambridge Female Autism Imaging Multicentre Study (AIMS) Project

We are looking for adult female volunteers aged 18 to 45 with a confirmed diagnosis of high functioning autism or Asperger syndrome to participate in this project, in order to help us investigate an important area which has been neglected for a long time: the cognitive and neuroimaging characteristics of females with autism spectrum conditions (ASC). This project has received ethical approval from the NHS National Research Ethics Service, Essex 2 Research Ethics Committee.

What do I need to do in the study?

Participants will need to complete certain tests and questionnaires online. Then participants will come to Cambridge to finish a set of neuropsychological testing with a trained researcher, as well as interviews in relation to ASC. This will be followed by giving a cheek swab (non-harmful brushing of your cheek) and saliva sample for the purposes of measuring DNA and hormone levels. Finally, we will ask participants to take part in an MRI brain scan where we will take pictures of the brain. MRI is a completely safe and non-invasive procedure and this research will enable us to make significant strides forward in our knowledge about the brain of females with ASC. We will also need to invite one of your parents (or main care-giver in your childhood who is familiar with your developments) to participate in an interview for your developmental history as a child. If your parent or care-giver is willing to participate but is not able to come in person, in certain instances we can visit her/him at where s/he lives.

Please note that due to the comprehensive assessments necessary for addressing the research goals, the time needed to complete the whole on-site testing will be around 6 to 8 hours in total, plus less than an hour online testing before you come. If you are from

outside of Cambridge, we will try to arrange all the testing in one day; but if you prefer to complete them separately in two days we can also fit your needs. If you are from Cambridge or surrounding areas, you can choose to complete them in one or two sessions.

What are the requirements for participating in the female AIMS project?

- 1) You are biologically female.
- 2) You are right-handed.
- 3) Your first language is English.
- 4) You, your parents, and grandparents must all be Caucasian.
- 5) You are between the ages of 18-45 years.
- 6) You are not claustrophobic.
- 7) You do not have any metallic or electrical implants in your body, including dental braces and heart pace-makers.
- 8) You do not have epilepsy, intellectual disability, current illicit drug addiction, psychotic disorders, genetic disorders associated with autism (for example, fragile X syndrome, tuberous sclerosis, and neurofibromatosis), or brain surgery in the past.
- 9) Your parent (or main care-giver in childhood) is willing to give an interview about your development.

Is there any reimbursement for participation?

For participation in the female AIMS project, we will full reimburse all travel expenses and will pay £60 for your time.

What should I do if I am interested in participating?

If you are interested in participating in this study, or have any further concerns or questions, please feel free to email Dr. Meng-Chuan Lai or Ms. Amber Ruigrok at mclai.cam@gmail.com for registration or inquiry. If possible, please include a contact number so we can discuss the project over the phone. Thank you for considering taking part in this study.