Biographical Information

Dr. Marsha Mallick Seltzer is the Vaughan Bascom Professor and Director of the Waisman Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She received her B.A. at UW-Madison in 1972 in Psychology and Sociology, and earned a Ph.D. in Social Welfare from Brandeis University in 1978. After 10 years on the faculty of Boston University, she moved to the UW-Madison in 1988, and she has been a Waisman Center core investigator since that time. Dr. Seltzer became director of the Waisman Center in 2002. With support from the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Seltzer’s research focuses on life course impacts of disability on the family. She investigates how lifelong caregiving affects the well-being of parents and siblings of individuals with disabilities, including autism, fragile X syndrome, Down syndrome, and schizophrenia. In addition, she has studied how the family environment affects the development of individuals with disabilities. Dr. Seltzer served as the interim director of the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery between 2006 and 2008, and has a number of academic affiliations across the campus, including the Institute on Aging and the Center for Demography of Health and Aging. Dr. Seltzer is chair of the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Centers Association, chair of the Gatlinburg Conference on Theory and Research on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, and the author of over 150 publications. Dr. Seltzer is the recipient of the Distinguished Research Award of The Arc and the Christian Pueschel Memorial Research Award of the Down Syndrome Congress.

Presentation Abstract

4:30 p.m.
Psychosocial and Biological Markers of Stress in the Lives of Mothers of Adolescents and Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Although autism is often thought of as a childhood disorder, the condition is lifelong, with the behavioral phenotype changing with development. The focus of this 10-year longitudinal study is to investigate how the behavioral phenotype of autism changes in adolescence and adulthood and to examine the long-term impacts on the family. Recent findings have revealed the bi-directional effects of the family environment on the behavioral phenotype of the individual with ASD, and the reciprocal effects of the symptoms and behavior problems of the individual with ASD on the family. This presentation will review the findings of this longitudinal study, highlight the critical role of the family in fostering positive behavioral outcomes, and examine the long-term impact on the physiology and health of mothers of adolescents and adults with ASD.