"**Windows of Communication Through Mobile Applications for Children With Autism," session 3118, Friday, Aug. 2, 10 to 10:50 a.m. HST, room 312, Rhonda McEwen, PhD.**

Mediating sociality: the use of iPod Touch™ and iPad devices in the classrooms of students with autism in Canada

This presentation will describe a study that explores the roles that lower-cost, handheld touch technologies might play in the classroom instruction of children diagnosed on the autism spectrum. It reports on a case study of the use of Apple iPod Touch and iPad mobile digital devices in a public elementary school in downtown Toronto, Canada. Researchers examined the consequences of handheld touch technologies on the communication and sociality of children with communicative disorders, with a primary emphasis on nonverbal autistic children. In the period between January 2010 and June 2010, touch devices were introduced into six elementary classrooms. While there were gains in communication for all participants, ranging from mild to significant, nine of the 12 students for whom we collected detailed data demonstrated statistically significant improvement in communication skills. Observations are made about the heightened levels of motivation, increased attention spans, and increased social interaction that students with ASD exhibited when using these devices. Future research should explore the connection of touch-sensory inputs on the communication development of children with autism spectrum disorders.

There are also some videos online from CBS 60 minutes coverage of McEwen's research:
US - CBS 60 Minutes clip http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuCbYNls0V0
Australia - CBS 60 Minutes clip http://sixtyminutes.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=8550313