

'PECS opens door to spontaneous communication'

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RIYADH: The Prince Salman Center for Disability Research (PSCDR) at the Diplomatic Quarters began on Monday a two-day training workshop on Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) — a form of augmentative and alternative communication that uses pictures instead of words to help autistic children communicate.

"PECS is a tried-and-tested approach that uses pictures to develop communications skills. It's appropriate for children and adults with a wide range of learning, speech and communication difficulties, including autism," said Gary Dadd, one of two speakers at the event, which is aimed at speech language pathologists, psychologists, occupation therapists and teachers dealing in autism.

Dadd spoke alongside Louise Malkin. Both are from the Pyramid Educational Consultants, established in the US in 1992 by Dr. Andy Bondy and with which PECS is associated.

Dadd said PECS is an opportunity to open the door to spontaneous communication. It is easy to access, affordable to implement and scientifically supported as one of the most effective communication interventions.

"Initially, it's introduced at home or in special schools, residential settings, outreach programs and care homes. It can be successfully implemented by family members or professionals.

"It does not require expensive or complex equipment and overcomes disadvantages found with signing and other picture-based augmentative communication systems," he said.

The seminar in Riyadh ends today, and the trainers will proceed to the Eastern Province where they will hold the same training seminar at the Carlton Al-Moaibed Hotel on Wednesday and Thursday.

PSCDR, whose board of directors is chaired by Prince Sultan bin Salman, has been helping handicapped children all over the Kingdom.