



SOUND ADVICE

**A Newsletter from the Communicative Disorders and Sciences Department.
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Autism in the Media

By: Jordan Nieto and Michelle Frankino

Autism, the most severe form of Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD), and Asperger's Syndrome, the milder form, have become an interest of the recent media. As the criteria for PDD expands, more people can be characterized as having some form of autism. Due to those recent changes, issues involving autism have been prevalent in the media.

Jason McElwain made headlines all over the nation for his triumph on the basketball court. This autistic teenager sparked curiosity in the media about autism and its characteristics. President Bush was so intrigued by Jason's story that he agreed to meet him, Columbia Pictures, and Magic Johnson with the intention of creating a movie based on Jason's life and his struggles with autism. Even more of an accomplishment was that Jason was nominated to be the Most Inspiring Person of the Year which brought more attention to the obstacles people with PDD have to overcome.

Recently on America's Next Top Model, one of the contestants, Heather, revealed that she was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. Asperger's Syndrome is the mildest form of PDD, where social skills are affected and limited the most. While filming America's Next Top Model, it

was noticed by all that Heather avoided large groups, and felt uncomfortable socializing with many people. When Heather revealed that she had Asperger's Syndrome, the rest of the aspiring models were intrigued and tried to understand her better.

Oprah also dedicated one of her shows to autism and heightened curiosity and better perception about the disorder. These examples are a few ways the media has brought awareness about the world of autism. In this era, where disorders seem to be frowned upon, the media along with outstanding individuals can inspire a new learning environment and outcome for people with disorders.

Cochlear Implants

By: Lauren Babcock and Sara Young

Cochlear implants, approved by the FDA in the mid-1980s, are helping thousands of hearing impaired individuals "hear". A cochlear implant is a small electronic device that provides a sense of sound to a person who has severe to profound nerve deafness. It consists of an external microphone, sound processor and transmitter system, and an implanted receiver and electrode system. The electrode system contains electronic circuits that receive signals from the external system and send electrical currents to the inner ear.

Cochlear implants are designed to help children and adults who are deaf or severely hard-of-hearing who get little or no benefit from hearing aids. The success rate differs with each individual based on multiple factors. Some of the factors include how long the patient has been deaf (the shorter the duration, the better), how old the person was when he/she became deaf (whether or not he/she could speak prior to becoming deaf), how old the person was when he/she got the cochlear implant (younger patients tend to do better), how long he/she has used the implant, and how quickly the person learns.

A cochlear implant is not a one-step fix to hearing loss. After receiving an implant the patient must learn how to interpret the sounds created by the implant. Speech-language pathologists and audiologists are often involved in this process. The therapy time needed after an implant may, in the future, be reduced due to studies exploring ways to make cochlear implants convey the sounds of speech more clearly. Researchers are also looking at the potential benefits of using a cochlear implant in one ear and either another cochlear implant or a hearing aid in the other ear. Technology has changed the lives of thousands of hearing-impaired individuals, and will continue to do so as research progresses.

ESL and Dialects

By: Casey Rovinski and Colleen Rogan

A dialect can commonly be described as a regional or social variety of a language that's distinguished from the standard literary language by pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, or speech pattern. Many researchers of dialect suggest that it is impossible to count the number of dialects inside and outside of the United States, because thousands of cities, towns, and social groups have their own dialect when the term is loosely interpreted. It is important for a speech-language pathologist (SLP) to

understand the unique phonological features of a specific dialect, so they are not misdiagnosing phonological disorders. Due to the wide variety of dialects in the world and the increasing population of English as a second language speakers in the United States, it is an important topic to explore as a future speech-language pathologist.

Each year, the United States has an influx of approximately 80,000 immigrants. Many choose to pursue speech therapy as way to improve their abilities to interact with other Americans. It is essential to acknowledge that the SLPs role is not to eliminate the dialect of the individual, but to increase intelligibility to help assimilate the individual into the American workforce.

The SLP also needs to acquire special skills in assessing and treating individuals who speak English as their second language, a dialectal variety of American English, or a different form of English. The SLP must be an expert in areas including the language and phonological characteristics, properties and rules of the individual's primary language. It is also important that the SLP understand if, and how, the primary language affects the learning of the new language. Most significantly, the SLP must establish whether there is a language or phonological disorder in the individual's first, second, or both languages. Understanding the complexities of dialects and how they may or may not be related to phonological processes is a key factor in working with English as a second language clients.

Get Involved!

By: Sarah Hunter

What other activities are speech-language pathology students at Geneseo involved with in order to better prepare them for their future career? A majority are members of NSSLHA, the National Student Speech, Language, and Hearing Association, which helps open students' eyes to current

issues, as well as providing students with fundraising and volunteer opportunities pertaining to the field or client populations.

Some students have become tutors through America Reads/America Counts, after school tutoring, or tutoring adults in basic literacy or English as a second language through Literacy Volunteers of America. Developing leadership skills through participating in hall councils, democracy matters, the GOLD programs, tour guides, or as resident assistants is also a trend amongst speech-language pathology majors. Organizations that revolve around diversity are also beneficial to learn about people with different backgrounds than oneself.

Other students within the major are involved in groups that give them more volunteer opportunities such as Alpha Phi Omega, a co-ed service fraternity (<http://www.geneseo.edu/~apo>), Royal Lady Knights (<http://www.geneseo.edu/~royallk>), and the Council for Exceptional Children, which provides activities for people of all ages with special needs (<http://www.geneseo.edu/~cec>). For more information about how you can become involved with more community service please visit any of the above websites or visit the Geneseo Volunteer Center, <http://www.geneseo.edu/~vc>.

Men in the Profession

By: Marc Johnson

It's quite obvious if you walk into any one of the Communication Disorders and Sciences classrooms at SUNY Geneseo that women dominate the field. This seems to be the trend across all universities offering the major. I was able to speak with Dr. Carlin Hageman, Executive Director of the National Student Speech, Language, and Hearing Association (NSSLHA). Dr. Hageman informed me that for about five years he did research on the number of men enrolled in the major at a handful of universities. His results

showed that a little less than three percent of students in the major were males. This is an alarming statistic considering that the ratio of males to females receiving therapy is almost two to one. With people who stutter, the ratio is about four males to every one female.

Much debate has been brought up concerning this topic. There are some people that believe nothing should be done. They do not think there is anything wrong with speech pathology and audiology being a female dominated field. However, the majority of people are starting to see the problem. ASHA is beginning to look into taking action. They are waiting on enrollment figures from programs across the country. If their results match Dr. Hageman's study, then they will adopt a proactive position to attract more males into the field of communicative disorders and sciences.

NSSHLA has already begun to take action. Dawn Dickerson, NSSHLA's Director of Operations, told me about a fundraising calendar that has been put together. The calendar highlights men who are currently in either the field of speech pathology or audiology. NSSHLA's representatives also give presentations at high schools throughout the country to seniors about to enter college. Dr. Hageman informed me that his school, the University of Northern Iowa, present twice a year to recruit students from psychology, biology, and the fine arts.

Slowly, factors are beginning to fall in place that will recruit men into the professions. It is important that men start to show an interest in the field. With the high number of males needing therapy, it is imperative to have a male influence in speech pathology and audiology. Hopefully, in time, male enrollment will improve, and people will be able to receive the therapy they need from both men and women.

“Sound” Advice

By: Lora Emel and Daria Reilly

Between classes, papers, work, and a couple moments for fun on the side, who has time to think farther than the next semester? As students, it is difficult to always know what would be the most beneficial actions to take. Current speech- language pathologists hold a world of knowledge and advice for current students to keep in mind while planning for their clinical experience, future exams, and even classes. We interviewed practicing SLPs in Geneseo’s speech department and the local Kidstart and asked them what they believed was the most important piece of advice they would give to current students, what they wished they had done when they were in college, and this is what they said.

When choosing what classes to sign up for each semester how should you choose your non- major classes? Dr. House explained how she wished she had taken more sociology and psychology courses, as they would have been useful to have that knowledge of how people think. Madelyn Mirwald had similar advice, recommending courses in child development. Professor Lofquist wished she had learned about the ABC’s of therapy (antecedent events, behavior, and consequences) and mini lessons before her first therapy session. Because of this, she teaches these topics in her Fundamentals of the Clinical Process class to ensure her students don’t miss out on these valuable topics.

In clinic, it is important to take the time to get to know the children and establish a rapport with them BEFORE placing any demands on them. Children respond better this way and it allows the clinician to be able to work in a more efficient and successful manner according to Joanie Banach. Other clinicians’ advice pertained to the Praxis exam. Jamie Beardsley recommended, “keep your books”, notes and everything else we

have related to our Praxis exam and getting the CCC’s. According to Kate Kress, taking difficult and challenging classes early to get them out of the way also allows lighter course loads that will be a benefit when it is time to study for the exam. She also found it useful to, “bring notecards to class and jot[ting] down important info on them so they are ready for big tests and later the Praxis!”

Practicing SLPs are a wealth of knowledge and students shouldn’t hesitate to ask them for their advice. They are always more than willing to share their experience to help us grow.

Need for Bilingual SLPs

By: Gabrielle Rowland

In today’s society, there is an increasing amount of the population speaking languages other than English. In a country such as the United States that is a melting pot of culturally diverse citizens, there are dozens of languages spoken at home and with friends among bilingual members of our communities. Thirty million people in the United States speak Spanish, closely followed by Chinese and French. Growing numbers of Spanish speaking children and adolescents in the school systems are making it necessary for speech language pathologists to be sufficient in Spanish, especially in states such as California and New Mexico.

There is a growing need to address how we as speech therapists interact with our clients who speak multiple languages. How do we proceed with assessment and treatment of bilingual clients when we have little to no grasp of their language? Some states, such as New Mexico, are endorsing a growing campaign for bilingual speech therapists. The greatest assets to a speech language pathologist working with bilingual clients are trained interpreters and members of the community.

Language, articulation, and phonological disorders that appear in

bilingual speakers' speech frequently occur in two or more of the languages spoken. There are two proposed approaches for working with bilingual clients. The bilingual approach suggests treating the language processes that are common to both languages, while the cross linguistic approach theorizes that working on the unique features of each language is the first necessary step. After choosing an approach, the language of intervention can be determined with the hope that the learned behaviors will generalize across the spoken languages.

As the majority of speech therapists works in the school system and will work with bilingual clients at some time during their career, the need for professionals with knowledge of other languages is becoming increasingly important. There is a growing need to educate ourselves about how to work with a bilingual population.

Autism, Play and the Development of Language

By: Katie Allen and Erin Filippini

The act of playing serves a vital role in the language development of children. Children with autism often lack the ability to play and interact with their peers. They are not able to communicate socially at the same level as normally functioning children. They often have trouble with the concept of imagination while playing with others. There are, however, certain measures that can be taken to facilitate techniques to enhance their playing skills, and ultimately improve their social interactions and language abilities.

It is helpful for the child to work with a peer that models appropriate social behavior. This is often a difficult role for a peer to have, because the child with autism may not always respond to communication attempts. In addition to having good social skills, the peer should be outgoing and very patient with the child. They should also spend time learning techniques to promote the best

possible social interaction with the child with autism. These techniques include initiating, responding, imitating, and turn taking.

Certain structured activities are helpful to promote interaction with the child. Activities that include sharing and turn taking are the best, because then the child and their peer are more likely to work together and cooperate in a social way. Some examples of these activities include playing with large floor puzzles, painting a box, and helping with daily chores. It is essential that structure and boundaries are provided with these activities in order to ensure the most success.

Play is a very crucial part of developing language. It is not only performed to enhance communicative abilities, but it is also a fun way for the child to experience the world around them. These techniques are not only beneficial to the child with autism. They are also helpful for the peers to learn new skills and interact with a more diverse group of children. Although it may be challenging for both the peer and the child, it is essential that children with autism have a chance to experience play and all of its rewards.

NSSLHA Makes a Difference

By: Sarah Hunter

This past semester, the Geneseo National Student Speech, Language, and Hearing Association has been making a name for itself throughout the campus and local community. NSSLHA has sponsored a Safe Zone Training to increase acceptance and awareness of sexual diversity, as well as invited Pam Hatch, the Deaf Person of 2006 in Rochester, to speak about Deaf culture, the Rochester School for the Deaf, and conflicting issues within the Deaf community.

NSSLHA formed a team for the Al Sigl Walkabout at Marketplace Mall and raised money for the Rochester Hearing and Speech Center, and they organized a fall festival for children in a clinic. Over the holidays, they collected items for the food

pantry, collected winter accessories for the needy, made holiday cards for nursing home residents, and adopted a family for the holidays.

Next semester NSSLHA is hoping to pursue ideas such as having reading buddies read to elementary school kids once a week, holding a graduate school fair, having a speaker talk about graduate school options, and possibly making a team for the Relay for Life and/or the March of Dimes.

NSSLHA has meetings every other Wednesday during all college hour and encourages all majors to become active! If you have any questions, please contact nsslha@geneseo.edu. In addition to being part of NSSLHA locally, you may also become a National NSSLHA member. So, start adding to your professional knowledge base through <http://www.nsslha.org/nsslha/join/>.

THANKS!

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