

## EDITORIAL

### The Speech Therapist and the Paediatrician

Various problems during the growth and development of children may have to be dealt with by the paediatrician at a children's hospital. A difficulty with speech may be one which will require further handling by the speech therapist. The role of the speech therapist is a vital one in assisting children overcome their speech difficulties. It can be both exacting and rewarding. It may be of some interest to consider the sources of referral.

Children may be brought to the polyclinic with delayed onset of speech, who are then sent on to the speech therapist for detailed assessment and management. Or, children may be seen and be examined in the first instance in the Respiratory Clinic. They are found to have a speech defect which requires the expert attention of the speech therapist. A young boy may attend the Child Psychiatry and Family Unit and one of his problems is that he stutters. This aspect will be dealt with by the speech therapist. She will have available the psychological and family background which will aid her in her approach. Another situation in which she finds herself very much part of the team is attendance at the cleft-palate clinic. Here the plastic and maxillo-facial surgeons will assess the extent of the local defects and plan long term treatment. Speech training forms a vital part of the prolonged management which may go on for up to ten years. Audiological assessment may be required particularly if there have been episodes of otitis media.

In a children's hospital the major bulk of work of the speech therapist lies with the children who attend the out-patient department. Three main categories of referral are stutterers, those with delayed speech and patients with cleft palate. But, there are also in-patients who require help. At present there are a number of children in the ward with speech problems. A little boy (3 years old) has a nominal aphasia associated with a right hemiplegia of acute onset. This was on the basis of vascular occlusion demonstrated by cerebral angiography. A girl, aged 10 years, has dermatomyositis with an extreme degree of muscle wasting and weakness of her palatal muscles. There is resultant nasal speech. Two patients with severe Sydenham's chorea are having great difficulty with their articulation. This they must find very distressing. All of these children require encouragement and the expert help of our speech therapist.

The situation may be reversed in that a patient is seen initially by the speech therapist, who may then require the expert opinion of a paediatrician. A detailed history especially of the natal and neonatal

period is essential. This will identify those infants who were at risk, and therefore liable to damage of the central nervous system. This may be the etiological factor in delayed speech, or it may be due to a rare inborn error of metabolism e.g. histidinaemia. On the other hand, dysarthria may be associated with choreo-athetosis rather than due to a localized abnormality e.g. Pierre-Robin syndrome. The detailed physical examination by the paediatrician will help to put matters into perspective. A speech problem may first become apparent in a child attending nursery school. The child is sent to a speech pathologist, who, in turn, may request an overall assessment from the paediatrician. Prompt handling by the team of nursery school teacher, speech therapist and paediatrician may be vital for the child's early school adaptation.

Thus a child's speech difficulty must be viewed in the total context, which includes an appraisal of the physical and mental status of that child. This implies a multidisciplinary approach which will often not only include the speech therapist and paediatrician, but also the paediatric neurologist, plastic surgeon, otolaryngologist and psychiatrist. With this attitude we hope we are able to offer the best possible total care to that child.

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## REDAKSIONEEL

### Die Spraakterapeut en die Kinderarts

Gedurende die groei en ontwikkeling van die kind kan verskeie probleme ontstaan waarmee die kinderarts (pediater) te doen kry. 'n Spraakafwyking kan een van die defekte wees wat verdere aandag vereis. Die spraakterapeut speel hier 'n noodsaklike rol om kinders by te staan in die oorkoming van hul spraakprobleme. Hierdie funksie kan veleisend, maar terselfdertyd ook belonend wees. Dit is belangrik om die bronne van verwysing in ag te neem.

Kinders met vertraagde spraakontwikkeling word na die polikliniek gebring en word daarna vir deeglike ondersoek en behandeling na die spraakterapeut verwys. Dit gebeur ook dat kinders in die eerste plek by die Asemhalingskliniek ondersoek word, waarna hulle vir deskundige behandeling na die spraakterapeut verwys word. 'n Jong seun sal miskien die Kinderpsigiatriese en gesinseenheid besoek waar onder andere bepaal word dat hy hakkel. Hierdie afwyking sal deur die spraakterapeut behandel word. In so 'n geval sal sy ook die sielkundige en gesinsagtergrond tot haar beskikking hê om haar behulpsaam te wees in die hantering van die geval.

'n Ander situasie waarin die spraakterapeut 'n belangrike deel van die span uitmaak, is die rol wat sy speel by 'n Gesplete Verhemelteeenheid. Plastiese en kaakgesigschirurge bepaal die omvang van die lokale defekte en beplan daarvolgens langtermyn behandeling. Spraakonderrig vorm 'n belangrike deel van so 'n behandelingsplan wat selfs oor 'n tydperk van 10 jaar kan strek. 'n Oudiometriese bepaling mag ook nodig blyk veral in gevalle waar otitis media in die geskiedenis voorkom.

In 'n kinderhospitaal verrig die spraakterapeut die meeste werk in die buitepasiënte-afdeling. Drie hoofkategorieë van verwysing is hakke-laars, vertraagde spraakontwikkeling- en gesplete verhemelte-gevalle. Op die oomblik is daar 'n aantal kinders in sale wat spraakafwykings openbaar. 'n Klein seuntjie, 3 jaar oud, het nominale afasie, gepaardgaande met regter-hemiplegie van akute oorsprong wat veroorsaak is deur vaskulêre okklusie gedemonstreer deur serebrale angiografie. 'n Tienjarige dogter bv. het dermatomiositis met 'n erge graad spieratrofie en swakheid van haar palatale spiere. Die gevolg hiervan is dus nasale spraak. Twee pasiënte met ernstige Sydenham se chorea ondervind groot moeite met artikulasie, met gevolglike frustrasie. Hierdie kinders het almal die aanmoediging, hulp en deskundige kennis van die terapeut nodig.

Die omstandighede kan natuurlik net omgekeerd wees deurdat 'n pasiënt eers deur 'n spraakterapeut ondersoek word, en dat sy daarna

die deskundige mening van 'n kinderarts benodig. 'n Noukeurige gevalsgeskiedenis van veral die voor- en geboortelike periode is noodsaklik. Hierdeur kan risiko-gevalle wat moontlik blootgestel was aan beskadiging van die sentrale senuweestelsel, uitgewys word. Bogenoemde kan die etiologiese faktor van vertraagde spraakontwikkeling wees, of dit kan ook die gevolg wees van 'n seldsame aangebore defek in die metabolisme, genoem histidinaemia.

Disartrie aan die ander kant, mag geassosieer wees met chorca-atetose eerder as die gevolg van 'n gelokaliseerde abnormaliteit, eersgenoemde staan bekend as die Pierre-Robin sindroom. Die deeglike fisiese ondersoek van die kinderarts sal help om sake in perspektief te stel. 'n Spraakprobleem by die kind kan in die kleuterskool vir die eerste keer onder die aandag kom. So 'n kind word dan na 'n spraakpatoloog verwys wat op haar beurt die geval na die kinderarts vir algemene ondersoek verwys. Tydige optrede en hantering deur die span van kleuterskoolonderwyseres, spraakterapeut en kinderarts is noodsaklik by die kind se aanpassing gedurende sy eerste skooljare.

'n Kind se spraakprobleem moet dus in sy geheel gesien word, wat 'n bepaling van so 'n kind se fisiese en geestelike status insluit. Hierdie veronderstel 'n multidissiplinêre benadering wat dikwels nie net 'n spraakterapeut en kinderarts betrek nie, maar ook die neuroloog, plastiese chirurg, otolaringoloog en psigiater insluit.

Met hierdie benadering hoop ons om die beste te bied vir die algehele versorging van die kind in nood.

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