



Media Release

Saturday 25 June 2011

Communication impairment severely impacts on children's education

Preschool children who have difficulty communicating are significantly less likely to perform well at school, according to a new study.

They were found to progress more slowly in reading and writing as well as more likely to feel bullied and enjoy school less.

The study investigated the link between children identified with communication impairment at four to five years of age and their educational outcomes when aged seven to nine years, with the results presented at the Speech Pathology Australia national conference this week.

Chief investigator Dr Jane McCormack from Charles Sturt University said the results of the study showed that communication difficulties impacted on children's overall school experience as well as on educational outcomes.

"Overwhelmingly, both parents and teachers reported slower progression in reading, writing and overall school achievement, while the children themselves reported more bullying, poorer peer relationships and less enjoyment of school," she said.

Dr McCormack believes the research indicates the need for speech pathology intervention beyond preschool, as well as the need to focus on the child's environment as well as their impairment.

"Early intervention is proven to improve outcomes for preschool children, however the current level of speech pathology services provided by education departments across Australia varies considerably, resulting in inconsistent services for children who most need critical early speech pathology intervention.

"By providing intervention that focuses on children's social development and self-esteem as well as their communication and academic achievement, we will be able to treat communication difficulties holistically and achieve a much better outcome for children in the long run," Dr McCormack said.

For more information on Speech Pathology Australia's national conference, visit www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au.

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Media contact

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About Speech Pathology Australia

Speech Pathology Australia is the national peak body for more than 4,500 members. The Association supports and regulates the ethical, clinical and professional standards of its members. The Association also lobbies and advocates for people with communication and swallowing difficulties.

Speech Pathology Australia's 2011 Conference

Local and international industry experts will examine topical issues at this year's conference.

The Conference theme is *Diversity & DevelopmeNT* and will showcase the innovative contributions of speech pathologists in advancing choices, knowledge and access. Held at the Darwin Convention Centre, the conference will run from 26-29 June 2011.

