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(Photo: Reuters)

Tom Hooper's film on George VI is expected to create greater awareness of the impacts of communication disorders and encourage people to seek help.

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'The King's Speech' lends support to communication advocacy

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By IBTimes Staff Reporter | January 24, 2011 5:27 AM EST

Colin Firth's convincing portrayal of King George VI struggling to overcome stammer and the depiction of the monarch's enduring relationship with speech therapist Lionel Logue in director Tom Hooper's film *The King's Speech* has done more than win awards and accolade from critics and audiences around the world. It has turned the spotlight on the serious physiological and psychological impacts of stammering and other communication disorders that affect millions across the world, thus providing a platform for related advocacy groups to press for greater resources and support to help them create awareness and offer suitable training and guidance to people who suffer such problems.

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The Independent reports that the campaign has received the backing of more than 50 organizations, including the departments of education and health, and from BT. Jean Gross, one of the leaders of the campaign, told the newspaper that the film has really brought out how "hurtful" it is to have communication difficulties -whether a stammer or something else - and that the film can play a really crucial role in awareness generation as long as people recognize that other subtler forms of difficulties exist too.

In [Australia](#), Chris Stone, the national President of SPA - the peak body for the speech pathology profession in the country - also welcomed the film's release in [Australian](#) cinemas and said she was confident that it will raise awareness of this communication disorder that affects at least 1 per cent of Australians.

The American Speech Language Hearing Association has also drawn upon the movie's success and alluded to certain aspects of it that can have a bearing on the approach towards tackling and treating problems of communication. In a series of videos on Youtube, the association's spokesperson Tommie L. Robinson speaks of how *The King's Speech* will benefit practitioners as well as sufferers. From the public perception standpoint, he says that it takes the negative light out of a problem such as stuttering. For clinicians, he feels that the focus on relationships and trust, as portrayed through the King's strong connection with his therapist, would be a high point as it is one of the most important elements of treatment in a problem such as this. However, Robinson also points out that some of the techniques highlighted in the film while very effective for the period to which the characters belonged (essentially 1930s) may now require to be revisited as many of the theoretical constructs have changed now. Nevertheless, the role of the film in highlighting the importance of communication health and its criticality in our everyday lives is unquestionable and is what would give a boost to the efforts of organizations operating in the domain.

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In the UK, The Communication Trust, a collaborative enterprise of more than 35 charities and non-profit organisations, is relying on the box office success of the film to help promote its 'Hello 2011 Year of Communication' campaign, which it will be launching shortly, according to British media reports.

The 'Hello' campaign aims to prioritize issues of communication in all homes and schools across the country. The Communication Trust feels that in the UK today, there are more than a million children who need some form of speech, language or communication assistance but in a large number of cases, their barriers or difficulties pass off unrecognized at the stage when help is required. Hello will provide information and guidance that helps to spot such needs and guide families and institutions to the right place for help and guidance.

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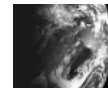
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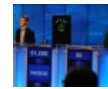
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