



Speech problems

– Early detection is crucial



Several factors can lead to speech problems, a condition that can occur from a very young age. Thus it is imperative that babies go through a hearing screening to detect any sign of hearing impairment, one of the causes of speech problems.

“It is best to detect hearing problems as early as possible (ideally before a child turns 1 year old). If there is hearing loss, a child should be fitted with hearing aid or have a cochlear implant performed, depending on the kind of hearing loss suffered,” explained Magdalene, a speech-language therapist at 20dB Hearing,

with interest in children with special needs, early childhood language delays, speech disorders and aural rehabilitation. She has practiced since 2003 in clinical settings, special schools and rehabilitation centres.

“The early years of a child’s life are the most important for building strong language skills. A child’s brain develops extremely fast during this time, and he’s more open to learning and more receptive to enriching experiences than he will ever be.

“From birth to 5 years of age, children learn language by participating in interactions with significant adults in their lives, e.g. his parents. When a child sends a message; with a gesture, a sound, or a word; his parents’ responses serve as helpful feedback that reinforce and encourage his learning. This responsive feedback is an essential ingredient in the language-learning process for every child,” she explained.

A child with speech problems may not be able to fully partake in activities and conversations, thus receiving little input and feedback from adults. This causes the child to fall behind everyone else his age. Thus prompt action is crucial upon detection of any sign of delays in the child’s communication development.

“The earlier a child receives the help he needs, the better his language outcome will be.”

Speech-language therapy at 20dB Hearing

“Speech therapy helps a child to learn to listen and develop speech. Parents need to work closely as partners with the speech-language therapist and eventually be trained as their own child’s therapist,” she said, explaining also that the commitment and involvement of parents, as experts of their own child, are crucial towards the success of the therapy.

“Parents need to monitor their child’s speech and language progress. If they have a gut feeling that their child might have some problems with speech and language or communication itself, they should seek help.”

Speech-language therapists at 20dB Hearing diagnose, treat and help prevent speech and language delays/disorders or communication disorders, and other related disorders such as voice, fluency, literacy and feeding disorders in children.

“The prognosis of therapy depends on, among many other factors, the skills and knowledge of the speech-language therapist, the severity and type of disorder, the age of the child, social and family dynamics.”

“Adults with communication difficulties are also seen at 20dB Hearing, with close cooperation with the adult’s significant others,” she concluded.

