

Have You Heard of Auditory Processing Disorder?

If your child has trouble focusing or following conversations, APD could be the culprit – and it's more common than you think

Ottawa, ON (December 13, 2012) — One of the most agonizing situations for a parent is knowing that something is wrong with your child but not knowing how to fix it or who to turn to for help.

Most of us have heard of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism and cerebral palsy, but another neurodevelopmental disorder—auditory processing disorder (APD)—is relatively unknown; a surprising fact given that APD affects an estimated 2-3% of children in Canada and recent research suggests that it is more common in adults and seniors than originally thought.

So what is auditory processing disorder? Put simply: APD affects the way the brain interprets the information the ears hear. Left untreated, the negative effects of APD can have lifelong consequences.

“One of the biggest challenges is that the behaviours and characteristics of APD are so similar to other disorders like, for instance, ADHD: difficulty listening and reading, short attention span, anxiety, memory problems, etc.” explains Dr. Chantal Kealey, Audiologist and Director of Audiology and Supportive Personnel at the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologist (CASLPA). *“It’s important to note that APD is not related to one’s level of intelligence; and, contrary to what you might expect, many people with APD have normal hearing.”*

Canadian Guidelines on Auditory Processing Disorder in Children and Adults: Assessment and Intervention were released today by the Canadian Interorganizational Steering Group for Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CISG), a consortium of professional associations, provincial regulatory bodies and university programs. The guidelines provide a framework for working with individuals with this disorder.

The way and degree to which APD affects someone is entirely unique, which means that assessment, treatment and management of this disorder must be tailored to each individual.

“The way the brain interprets information is different from person to person. Some people with APD have trouble determining where a sound is coming from, for others, the sounds they hear become garbled,” explains Kealey. *“As a member of CISG, CASLPA is confident that these guidelines will shed light on APD and help ensure that this disorder is managed in a consistent way across Canada.”*

In some cases, stroke, a head injury or chronic ear infections may be possible causes for ADP; however, in many cases, there is no known cause. And, while there is no cure for APD, the good news is that it can be treated. Audiologists and speech-language pathologists can work with individuals to re-train the brain to interpret auditory information correctly.



To ensure that testing is reliable and results are valid, assessment of APD is not typically done until a child reaches approximately 7 years of age. However— it is important to reach out to a health-care professional if you suspect that APD may be present.

We encourage parents and caregivers concerned about a child’s communication development, or anyone experiencing communication difficulties themselves, to seek help. For more information about APD or to find an audiologist or speech-language pathologist in your area, please visit www.speechandhearing.ca.

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CASLPA, with over 6,000 members, is the only national body that supports and represents the professional needs of speech-language pathologists, audiologists and supportive personnel inclusively within one organization. Through this support, CASLPA champions the needs of people with communication disorders. Visit CASLPA at www.caslpa.ca or learn more at www.speechandhearing.ca.

About CISG:

The Canadian Interorganizational Steering Group for Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CISG) is a consortium of speech-language pathology and audiology provincial regulatory bodies, professional associations and university programs. The group is working together to coordinate the development of practice standards and guidelines and, to this end, will release documents jointly.

For more information, please contact:

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