

## REFERRAL TO OTHER HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Your speech – language therapist will attempt to work collaboratively with other health professionals involved in treating your case. At times it may be necessary for the practitioner to contact others to discuss your treatment plan. Your consent will be obtained before this occurs.

You may also be referred on to another health professional e.g. your GP, OT or a counsellor for additional testing, advice or treatment which is outside the scope of speech – language therapy.

## CANCELLATIONS AND MISSED APPOINTMENTS

In the interest of other patients requiring appointments we require at least 24 hours notice if you wish to cancel. This allows us to offer your appointment time to another patient.

If you do not attend your appointment and fail to notify us you will be charged a cancellation fee. This will be 50% of the scheduled fee. Discretion will be used in cases of emergency and where appointments are rescheduled.



### **Health funds**

Health funds rebates are available through Medicare and selected private health care funds. Please refer to your health fund policy for details of what services you are covered for.

**For more information please contact  
[rishenda@pihc.com.au](mailto:rishenda@pihc.com.au)**

## Speech – Language Pathology

**Rishenda Goodwin  
BSc. (SHS), BA (Dip. Psych.)**



## **SENIORS**

This leaflet is designed to answer any questions you may have about how speech and language difficulties in older patients can be helped by speech therapy.

**Perth  
Integrated  
Health Clinic**

*41 Havelock St West Perth*

*Ph: (08) 9226 1239*

*Fax: (08) 9226 1259*

**TUES; 9:15 – 2:30**

**WED; 9:15 – 2:30**

**THURS; 1:30-5:30**

## Speech Pathologists working with older people

In our society the number of persons aged over 65 is rapidly increasing and it is estimated that by the year 2011 more than one million Australians will be 75 years or older. Along with this growth, the proportion suffering a communication or swallowing problem is also expected to increase.

Speech pathologists are involved in the assessment and management of communication and swallowing problems. They are uniquely qualified to respond to the total communication needs of older people, to assist individuals and families to manage and overcome these difficulties and to promote independence, participation and self-fulfilment.

### Communication problems

Difficulties involving communication are common amongst older people. Their ability to speak clearly, understand others or express their wants and needs may be reduced, as a result of diseases such as stroke, dementia or Parkinson's Disease. Along with this, many older people may suffer multiple medical problems.

Speech pathologists work with older people, their families and carers to identify and treat communication difficulties. They are involved in promoting effective communication as a fundamental requirement for maintaining an older person's quality of life.

### Swallowing problems

Swallowing disorders refer to the loss of ability or desire to feed oneself. Difficulty in swallowing is common amongst older people. Ageing or disease can result in difficulty organising and coordinating the muscles for swallowing. It is estimated that between 16-22% of people aged over 50 years will have problems eating and drinking. A swallowing disorder can compromise a person's health and well being and result in coughing, choking, chest infection, dehydration and malnutrition.

Speech pathologists provide careful assessment and diagnosis of swallowing problems. They advise on swallowing techniques, exercises and may offer dietary alternatives to reduce the risks of ill health and to promote safety and comfort in swallowing.

### Stroke

Stroke affects approximately 40 000 Australians every year and two thirds of these people are aged over 65 years. Stroke can result from a sudden disruption in the flow of blood to the brain. When blood cannot reach parts of the brain, vital supplies of oxygen are cut off from the brain cells that control everything we do, such as talking, walking, swallowing and breathing. Consequently, a stroke can result in brain damage and significant disability.

Speech pathologists help individuals regain their ability to communicate and

swallow effectively after a stroke. Speech and swallowing therapy can enable stroke sufferers to improve their outcome thus reducing the likelihood of further ill health and nutritional decline.

### Dementia

Dementia is more than simply "forgetfulness". It is a term used to describe widespread deterioration in mental functions. It may result in difficulties in reasoning, judgment and emotional control as well as memory loss. The person with dementia may find it difficult to formulate a sentence, understand what is said to them, or even remember how to swallow.

Speech pathologists work with the carers of persons with dementia to help promote effective communication. They can advise regarding simplifications to the person's environment to help maintain successful relationships and facilitate independence.

**Adapted from The Speech Pathology Association of Australia fact sheet 3.3, 11-19 Bank Plc Melbourne Vic 3000**