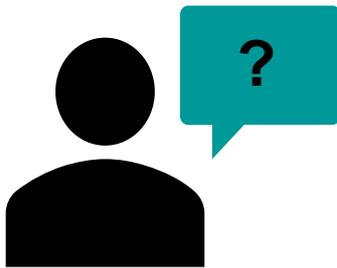


Red flags for speech impairment: who should we refer to speech therapy

Key terms

childhood speech development, normative data

What this research is about

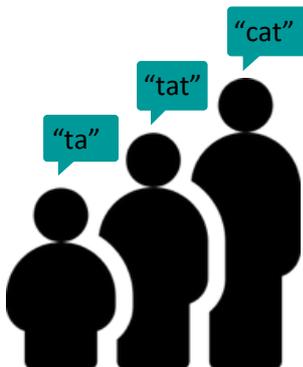


Many children make speech errors when they learn to talk. Some types of errors are common while others are rarely seen. The rare errors are the 'red flags' to watch for.

Many parents seek guidance from their general practitioners (GPs) about their child's speech development. However, there is not a lot of data to help them know which children to refer for speech therapy.

We wanted to understand how speech develops in a large group of children, and to work out which children are most at risk for speech disorder and therefore who we need to refer for support.

What the researchers did



- 1,186 children took part
- Children were 2 to 12 years old
- Speech was assessed at schools, kindergartens, and childcare centres
- Speech pathologists assessed speech development by asking children to name pictures on an iPad and listening to the way they produced sounds and words

What the researchers found



- Many children make speech errors until 6 years old.
- Some parts of speech development was slower compared to 20 years ago, but not more disordered.
- We developed a tool to identify which children may be at risk of speech disorder.

What this means for children and their families



- Children at risk of speech disorder may be identified and referred for appropriate support sooner, rather than a “watch and wait” approach.
- Children who make speech errors similar to their peers may be less likely to be referred to speech therapy unnecessarily.

What this means for healthcare professionals



- The study provides new data and a tool to identify which children to refer for speech therapy.
- A health care professional can look at Table 3 and determine the types of patterns and whether they are common amongst peers or ‘red flag’ errors.

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