



Within Earshot

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

President's 1
Address

In Focus: May is 2
Better Hearing
& Speech Month

Update: 3
Research Issues
Portfolio

Previous BHSM 4
Activities

Light & Easy 5

Editor's Note 6

Letter to the 6
Editor

The President's Address

Happy Lunar New Year 2011! May the Year of the Rabbit be a happy, healthy and prosperous one for all.

As we churn out our first issue for 2011, we are painfully aware of the limitations we have in terms of time and resources. A very BIG kudos goes to bubbly, enthusiastic Nadirah who has been instrumental in keeping Within Earshot together. A Xie-Xie Nie to all contributors to date who have been very supportive. As we all strive to keep in balance family commitments, work commitments, social commitments and professional commitments we can easily find that life is crowded and some tasks and projects get scaled down or completely knocked off our plate so to speak. I realize that much work in MASH is full-time work currently accomplished by a dedicated EXCO on an extended, part-time basis. It is difficult, to say the least. So bearing this in mind, *terima kasih* to all our EXCO, and our working members of the various Portfolios who have been active behind the scenes; Research Issues, Medico-Legal, Information Management and Student Affairs portfolios. Your ideas, energy and input are appreciated!

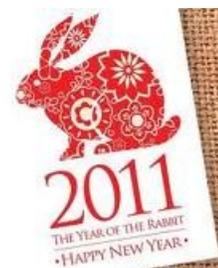
As we look towards the coming months MASH can look forward to;

- A professional development talk entitled "Patients, Protection, Profession" on March 12, 2011
- Our upcoming general assembly also on March 12, 2011
- BHS events and activities for the month of May
- Our AGM in June, 2011

I trust we can also trust in your support as "*berat sama dipikul, ringan sama dijinjing*". We approach you to write articles, give talks, and provide various services to strive to bring our respective professions to the fore.

Thanks to all in advance! Gong Xi Fa Cai!

Warm Regards,



In Focus: May is Better Hearing & Speech Month

by Melissa Peter

It is modestly estimated that about 10 percent of consumers would have some form of speech, language or hearing disorder (World Health Organization). Malaysia's current population is estimated at about 25 million people (July, 2010). This would project an expected 2, 500, 000 Malaysians who would have some sort of a speech, language or hearing disability. It is therefore imperative that all associated bodies and organizations be aware of the diversity, severity and handicap of hearing and speech-language impairments that exist. It is equally imperative that the roles of professionals involved in these impairments namely, audiologists and speech-language pathologists are made known in our country.

May, "Better Hearing and Speech Month" is an annual occasion dedicated to increasing the general public's awareness of communications disorders. It has been celebrated across North America since 1927. This month is one in the year when professionals involved with the treatment of speech, language and hearing disorders come together to participate in public awareness campaigns that encourage early detection and prevention of communication disorders, and seek to increase the public's sensitivity to the challenges faced by individuals experiencing them.

Locally, the Malaysian Association of Speech-Language and Hearing (MASH) has been actively promoting Better Hearing and Speech Month (BHS) since 2006 when it was officially launched for the first time. The years between have been subdued with a revival of activity nationwide in a very successful BHS 2010. Members volunteered their time and services to give talks, man booths, offered products and services at discounts or free-of-charge to the public. Collectively, the last 5 years have seen various individuals, companies, organizations and institutions collaborating in various events and activities to promote greater understanding and awareness of the areas of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. It has also presented opportunities for those involved in these events to network and collaborate more closely. This has created room for professional growth, development and expansion.

As audiologists and speech-language pathologists working within the Malaysian setting we need to be aware of helping our country become a developed nation. Speech-language pathologists and audiologists can use this campaign to raise the level of public awareness, encourage community participation and empower individuals to spread the word about the value of audiology and speech-language services available in the country. This, in turn will keep the public informed and provide them with guidelines as well as a means to access services for those who will benefit from intervention.

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May is Better Hearing & Speech Month (cont.)

This year the goals of MASH in promoting May is Better Speech and Hearing Month are;

- ◆ *To create public awareness regarding the importance of hearing, speech and language in everyday life.*
- ◆ *To educate the public on the importance of early detection and intervention of hearing, speech and language problems.*
- ◆ *To introduce MASH as a body by which the public can refer to ensure that those with hearing and speech problems receive the proper advice and management.*
- ◆ *To provide community service by offering free hearing and speech screening to the public.*
- ◆ *To educate the public on the roles and services provided by the Audiologist and Speech-Language Pathologist*

In line with these goals MASH has planned the following activities;

- ◆ A drawing competition for children open to the public
- ◆ A poster campaign for members of MASH
- ◆ Public education events through the media (details to be provided)
- ◆ Discounts on products and services

There are many more ways in which we MASH could celebrate the month. However, resources and time limitations are everyone's bane. In line with the above-mentioned goals, audiologists and speech-language pathologists in the country are requested to rise to the occasion of celebrating the month of May. It is hoped that they strive forward to inform and educate policy-makers, referral sources, school administrators on matters related to speech-language and hearing. This is a great platform for our profession to be heard and to inform others of services available as our country moves progressively forward. The more we put of ourselves into this endeavour the more we reap of its rewards for us all collectively. It is our hope that all members will be taking the opportunity this year to show pride in their professions and help raise awareness of the issues relating to speech, language and audiology in their communities across the nation.

Update: Research Issues Portfolio

Team members (in charge for this project):

Low Hui Min, PhD Scholar (Speech-Language Pathologist); Farah Marliza Alkaf, PhD (Audiologist)

Projects:

- * Listings of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Journals
- * Listings of Conferences For Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists

Thanks to the RI Portfolio, MASH members will be frequently updated on the two listings stated above. It'll be up on www.mash.org.my soon so don't forget to check it out!

Previous BHSM Activities by MASH EXCO 2008/2010

MASH Executive Committee for 2008/2010 initiated and organized Better Hearing & Speech (BHS) Campaign on a Community-Based platform nationwide from the 1st of May till the 31st of May 2010. The campaign included states of Selangor, Penang, Kelantan, Perak, Sarawak, Kedah, Negeri Sembilan and Federal Territory, Kuala Lumpur. The activities carried out were: speech, language, communication & hearing screenings and consultations, talks & workshops, free needs counselling sessions, discounts/rebates on services and products, educational & photo contests, cochlear implant program anniversary celebrations in Penang and a cochlear implant family day in Selangor. 16 ordinary members and 3 audiology student members were directly involved in giving talks/workshops and screenings and a total of 4 member's companies/employers (and their respective Audiologists and Speech-language Pathologists) participated in the event.

MASH partnered with CADs Enhancement Centre Kuala Lumpur, Pusat Sindrom Down Lion's Club Kota Bharu, Persatuan Sindrom Down Malaysia (PSDM) and National Stroke Association of Malaysia (NASAM) and even sponsored light refreshments in the BHS events held at respective centres.



Light & Easy: Coffee Break, Anyone?



We all have that one person in the office who just can't function properly until they've had their cup of coffee in the morning (WE is sure we can find a few guilty MASH members). And who doesn't get a boost out of a candy bar around mid-afternoon? A short article in the APA Monitor synthesized some of the most relevant research on world's most widely accepted drug: CAFFEINE.

Issue 1: Is there a placebo effect for caffeine?

Well, like almost any other psychological question, the answer is "it depends". Forty-five minutes after participants received caffeinated coffee but thought they were given decaf, they reported more physiological withdrawal symptoms than every other group in this classic placebo experimental design (got/didn't get caffeine, thought they got caffeine/thought they got decaf) ... that is, if they expected they would feel sluggish and tired, they reported that way. However, after a couple of hours, the placebo effect wore off. So, from a physiological point of view, placebo effects only work in the short term. You can't fool your body for long though; it'll soon realize what's up and respond accordingly.

Issue 2: Is there a performance boost gained from caffeine?

This one had another typical psychological answer, "yes, but..." Participants who were given caffeine performed better at a mundane task than those that were given a placebo, despite the fact that the placebo group reported that they felt the effects of caffeine and performed better because of them. So, caffeine does give you a brief boost in performance. BUT ... let's not forget: it's a drug (think psychoactive stimulant) and it can have harmful, addictive affects if it's abused (i.e.: cardiac problems, anxiety disorders, insomnia, digestive problems, withdrawal)!

Issue 1 + Issue 2 = a solution?

So, we see that there are performance benefits to caffeine, but we want to avoid consuming too much of it. Lets bring the placebo back in! Military researchers in China found that people who consumed caffeine followed by placebos sustained attention better without consuming much caffeine. That is, participants benefitted from the initial boost that caffeine provides, as well as the benefits that come from simply believing they'd had caffeine (without the negative side-effects of actually having it).

Whether you decide to start clandestinely switching the coffeepot out for decaf at 10:30 is a decision you'll have to make. The point is that caffeine consumption is a decision that shouldn't be taken lightly. The benefits should be weighed with the risks, which are too often ignored.

(Price, M. (2008). *Caffeine's wake up call. Monitor on Psychology. 39.*

source: "Coffee Break Anyone?" <http://ioatwork.typepad.com/ioatwork/turnover/Wellness>)



Letter to the Editor

Dear WE team,

Just to say what a wonderful job each of you are doing in bringing WE back to life!

Keep up the good work.

Pamela

SLP, Kota Bahru, Malaysia

Ed: Thank you Pamela, we try to do our best.

You've been a great contributor yourself!

Hello, 2011!

The end of 2010 and beginning of 2011 has been really crazy-hectic! The WE team had (and still has) lots of ideas for the new year but was bombarded with other commitments. As a result, a joint issue of January-February of WE for your perusal.

This issue focuses on building up the excitement for May is Better Hearing & Speech Month campaign, as it is just a mere 4 months away! We also put in last year's campaign to remind everyone what a success it was. In fact, MASH members can also look up on other previous campaigns in the MASH website (see *News & Events > Better Hearing and Speech Month* or *Links > MASH events*).

We've thought of lots of activities for the special month. Watch out for this space as we'll be updating MASH members constantly. We definitely need everyone's support and contribution to make BHS 2011 campaign happen!

For the upcoming issue, we will be going back to the past and focus on history of MASH. Got a favorite MASH member moment? Share with us! We look forward to hearing from you.

Till then, have a blessed, prosperous new year ahead!

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membership privileges at
www.mash.org.my**