



Early Communication Assessments

Speech Pathology Case Studies:
12 months – 3 ½ years of age

Our aims for today...



- To cover some common and more complex issues that may come through your doors.
- To talk about how we as Speech Pathologists would assess each child, and what we are looking for.
- To look at whether these issues are within normal limits and the course of therapy we would recommend.
- To look at other services we might recommend to further develop communication skills or to address related issues.

“Noah” - 12 months old

Background information



Noah is a 13 month old boy, who was referred by his mother following concerns from the MCHN at his 12 month old check.

Noah's Mother, Mei, is from a Non-English speaking background and English is her second language. Mei's first language is Mandarin.

Noah appeared to be using some loud babble with mostly vowel sounds and two consonant sounds, however is not using any recognisable words. Mei also reports that Noah is struggling to eat the family food. Doesn't like to eat meat and prefers to still eat pureed food.

“Noah” - 12 months old

Assessment



- Assigned to a Speech Pathologist who also speaks Mandarin.
- Assessed Noah’s receptive and expressive language skills in both English and Mandarin. Formal and informal assessment.
- Assessment and observation of a typical meal time for Noah at home, to assess his feeding issues. ?oral Sensory Defensiveness or oro-motor issues.

“Noah” - 12 months old



Outcome & Recommendations

- Mild receptive language difficulties and mild expressive language delay in both Mandarin and English.
 - Use visual prompts
 - Use simple rhymes and songs in both English & Mandarin
 - Encourage face-to-face interactions throughout daily routines
 - Encourage child to have more chewy and crunchy foods
 - Hearing assessment with Audiologist
 - Parent-Child Mother Goose Program
 - Supported playgroups for Mandarin speaking parents

“Ava” – 18 months old



Background Information

Ava is an 18 month old girl who is reported to be babbling a lot, but still only uses a few words. Ava is starting to become quite frustrated when she can't get her message across.

Ava's mother, Angela, reports that Ava always seems to sound like she has a cold and tends to be quite 'snotty' most of the time, even in summer months. She wakes a lot during the night, and Mum describes Ava as a 'poor sleeper'. Ava snores when asleep.

Ava was observed to be drooling a lot and her top was wet around neckline. Angela stated that Ava needs a change of tops, due to her drooling, 1-2 times during the day. Ava has had a number of ear infections, but all hearing tests have come back WNL. There is also a family history of food allergies and asthma.

“Ava” – 18 months old



Assessment

- Examination of oral structures & oro-motor movements:
 - Lips, tongue, cheeks, palate
- Formal language assessment tasks and informal play-based assessment to assess receptive language skills & expressive language skills:
 - Using both formal assessments & informal observation gives a ‘well-rounded’ view of abilities.

“Ava” – 18 months old



Outcomes & Recommendations

- Oral examination:
 - Poor lip closure, mouth breathing, drooling, reduced range of movement in the tongue. Very large tonsils noted. Voice quality was ‘hyponasal’.
 - Oral awareness strategies provided to use in daily routines – before brushing teeth, using back of vibrating toothbrush to ‘wake up’ muscles.
 - Recommended referral to ENT to further assess ears, tonsils adenoids & check oral structures. ENT prior to SP intervention.
- Language assessment:
 - Mildly delayed expressive language. Receptive language WNL.
 - Poor oro-motor skills having significant impact on intelligibility of expressive language.

“James” – 2 years old



Background Information

James is an 18 month old boy, who is developing well with his gross motor and fine motor skills, and is described as a ‘busy’ boy. James’ mother, Fiona, reports that although he says quite a few words, James tends to repeat words that others say, but may not use the words again for a while. Eye contact is reported to be good.

Fiona also reports that James likes to ‘do his own thing’ and doesn’t seem to play like her other children did. James likes to sort his cars into size and ‘parks’ them in specific places. He becomes very upset if his siblings come along and take one of the cars or puts them in the ‘wrong’ place.

“James” – 2 years old



Assessment

- Formal receptive and expressive language assessment was attempted, but unable to complete.
- Informal assessment was conducted through observation during play.
 - Receptive language – following instructions, knowledge of concepts, identifying objects, people and actions.
 - Expressive language – encourage talking through play and analyse use of vocabulary, grammar and structure.

“James” – 2 years old



Outcomes & Recommendations

- Expressive language:
 - Echolalic
 - Significantly delayed
 - Recommended regular speech pathology sessions to give parent strategies to encourage spontaneous language
- Receptive language:
 - Significantly delayed
 - Unable to follow simple, 1-step instructions without prompts
 - Recommend use of visual prompts and schedules

“James” – 2 years old



Other Recommendations

- Referral to Developmental Paediatrician
- Referral to Early Childhood Intervention Service
- Appointment with GP to access Medicare CDM plan

“Ella” – 3 ½ years old



Background Information

Ella is a 3 ½ year old girl who is saying words and sentences, but they are very unclear. Ella’s mother can reportedly understand her, but other people outside of the family have great difficulty. Ella also sometimes ‘gets stuck’ when trying to tell her Mum something.

Ella’s mother, Grace, is concerned about Ella’s speech and that it is starting to impact her at kinder with her friendships, as other children can’t seem to understand what she is saying. Ella gets frustrated and will sometimes ‘lash out’ at others.

Ella comes from a single-income family, so private therapy may not be an option in the long term.

“Ella” – 3 ½ years old



Assessment

- Speech was assessed:
 - Formally – single words, looking at articulation
 - Informally – conversation, looking at phonology
- Fluency assessed in conversation:
 - Stutter or normal dysfluency?
 - Assess rate of speech – how fast she speaks
 - Number of dysfluencies
 - What ‘kind’ of dysfluencies is she using?

“Ella” – 3 ½ years old



Outcomes & Recommendations

- Fluency / stuttering:
 - About 4% of syllables stuttered = “mild stutter”
 - Dysfluency is a higher priority than speech sounds.
 - Recommend starting Lidcombe Program:
 - Parents taught how to do tx at home & record
 - Weekly SP sessions to review progress
 - To help with cost of private therapy, see if Ella is eligible for Medicare CDM plan through GP

“Ella” – 3 ½ years old



Outcomes & Recommendations – cont'd

- Articulation/ Phonology:
 - Presented with a moderate phonological disorder.
 - Initial consonant deletion
 - Fronting
 - Regular speech pathology sessions required.
 - To keep costs down, put Ella on waiting list for Community Health Services or attend group therapy programs at a speech pathology clinic.
 - Full hearing evaluation by an Audiologist.