

PRESS RELEASE

European Day of Speech and Language Therapy March 6th 2008
"Speech and Language Therapy: More than Words"

Together with 30 European organisations members of CPLOL (Standing Liaison Committee of Speech and Language Therapists / Logopedists in the European Union), the Association of Speech Language Pathologists (ASLP) is celebrating the European Day of Speech and Language Therapy. The event is being held in Malta for the first time.

The theme chosen for this year is "Neurological Conditions in Childhood". These conditions affect children who have neurological disorders like brain damage, cerebral palsy, dyspraxia and post-traumatic aphasia. These conditions occur due to a lesion sustained in the brain during the peri- and/or post-natal period. The difficulties include a persistent disorder of movement and/or posture that varies in mode of presentation and severity, from mild to severe, and changes can occur over time.

Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) working with these children do make a difference in the rehabilitation process. Early intervention provides better results. The work of SLPs with children who are diagnosed with neurological disorders includes the stimulation of pre-linguistic and linguistic development and communication skills. The aim of therapy is to maximise the potential of the individual. It is important to note that there is no relationship between the degree of physical impairment and cognitive ability. In situations where speech may not be the most effective mode of communication for the individual due to the severity of the neurological condition, alternative and augmentative means of communication may be indicated and devised. Where necessary, SLPs offer assessment and advice regarding feeding/swallowing difficulties. SLPs also help in developing social skills, promoting quality of life and positive results in academic development.

SLPs also work with individuals presenting with a variety of other communications difficulties. The most common communication difficulties in children attending speech-language therapy include developmental speech and language difficulties, dysfluency, autism and hearing impairment. SLPs also work with adults who present with voice problems or communication difficulties due to acquired conditions such as stroke, Parkinson's and Dementia, to mention a few.

The ASLP was launched in 1985 and was immediately recognised as a professional association by the Federation of Professional Bodies in Malta. It was set up with four main aims that are still valid today: 1) safeguarding the profession, 2) safeguarding the professional code of ethics, 3) keeping up with standards and current developments, and, 4) creating public awareness. Over the past twenty years, as the number of qualified SLPs increased, the association has kept growing and developing to meet current challenges. More details on the ASLP may be found on our website www.aslpmalta.org or on contact number 21312888.

The Speech Language Department (SLD), is also participating in the celebrations for the day. The SLD premises at Ingiered Rd, Luqa (near SVPR) will be open for the

general public on Thursday 6th March between 8am -3pm. People are welcome to visit the premises and ask questions. The SLD co-ordinates SLP services offered through the Health Department. Services are provided through all Health Centres and Government Hospitals, a number of district clinics and Special schools. Details may be obtained on tel no. 21230822 or e-mail speechlanguage@gov.mt