

The Cambridge Handbook of Communication Disorders

Many children and adults experience impairment of their communication skills. These communication disorders impact adversely on all aspects of these individuals' lives. In thirty dedicated chapters, *The Cambridge Handbook of Communication Disorders* examines the full range of developmental and acquired communication disorders and provides the most up-to-date and comprehensive guide to the epidemiology, aetiology and clinical features of these disorders. The volume also examines how these disorders are assessed and treated by speech and language therapists and addresses recent theoretical developments in the field. The handbook goes beyond well-known communication disorders to include populations such as children with emotional disturbance, adults with non-Alzheimer's dementias and people with personality disorders. Each chapter describes in accessible terms the most recent thinking and research in communication disorders. The volume is an ideal guide for academic researchers, graduate students and professionals in speech and language therapy.

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In memory of
R. Steven Ackley
A committed author and audiologist

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Preface

Communication disorders rarely achieve the prominence of a large range of other conditions that compromise human health and wellbeing. Yet, these disorders represent a significant burden on society in general, and compromise the quality of life and opportunities of the children and adults who experience them. In the UK, the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists estimates that approximately 2.5 million people have a communication disorder. Some 800,000 of these people have a disorder that is so severe that it is hard for anyone outside their immediate families to understand them. In the USA, the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders estimates that one in every six Americans has some form of communication disorder. If these figures do not make a compelling case for the assessment and treatment of communication disorders, then perhaps the reader will consider these comments made in 2006 by Lord Ramsbotham, the Chief Inspector of Prisons in the UK: 'When I went to the young offender establishment at Polmont I was walking with the governor, who told me that if, by some mischance, he had to get rid of all his staff, the last one out of the gate would be his speech and language therapist'. No statement more forcefully demonstrates how an individual's life chances are adversely affected by communication disorders, or the extent to which speech and language therapy can successfully intervene in these disorders.

Of course, speech and language therapy (speech-language pathology) is only possible to the extent that communication disorders are the focus of intensive academic study and clinical research. The chapters in this handbook are intended to bring to the reader the very latest knowledge of those disorders, from the epidemiology, aetiology and clinical features of communication disorders through to their assessment, treatment and theoretical significance. Each contributor has been chosen for his or her expertise in a particular communication disorder or group of disorders. This expertise is founded upon a substantial record of research in each

case alongside direct clinical experience of the disorders in question. The result is a collection of chapters that represents the state of the art in communication disorders, both in terms of how these disorders are conceived and how they are clinically managed.

The expansion in clinical communication sciences has been such that each aspect of a communication disorder is now the focus of extensive research. The researcher who is concerned with investigating the epidemiology and aetiology of specific language impairment in children will certainly be aware of how this disorder is assessed and treated without directly contributing to the development of techniques in these areas. It is not possible to do justice to these different dimensions of communication disorders within single chapters. It is in an effort to capture the depth of research in each of these areas that the volume has been divided into five parts. Parts I, II and III examine the epidemiology, aetiology and clinical features of the full range of developmental and acquired communication disorders. These disorders include impairments in speech and language (Parts I and II) as well as voice, fluency and hearing (Part III). Part IV examines the clinical management of communication disorders. The chapters in this part reflect current thinking about how communication disorders can best be assessed and treated. In doing so, they address areas where the evidence base for clinical practice is poorly developed as well as areas where there is a much higher level of evidence in support of specific techniques and practices. Finally, a number of theoretical developments have enhanced our understanding of communication disorders. Similarly, communication disorders can make a significant contribution to theoretical debates in speech-language pathology and beyond. Part V in this volume contains chapters which explore theoretical developments at the levels of phonetics and phonology (speech production models), syntax (cognitive modularity), semantics (semantic models) and pragmatics (theory of mind).

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I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the authors of the chapters that appear in this volume. The professionalism and commitment they have shown has been truly gratifying. I have gained intellectually from the experience of working with them. This volume simply would not have been possible without their expertise and dedication.