

Project Number: CC009

Title: Exploring relationships and associations between children's cleft type and early speech and language development

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Scientific Outline:

It is known that children with cleft palate are more likely than their non-cleft peers, to have persisting speech sound disorder, with evidence suggesting that more than 50% require SLT intervention at some point. A review of speech outcomes from the Cleft Speech Audit Group (CSAG) found that 19% of 5-year-olds with Unilateral Cleft Lip and Palate (UCLP) and 4% of 12-year-olds with UCLP were judged to be impossible to understand or only just intelligible to strangers. There are some anecdotal findings which suggest children born with cleft lip only may also have problems with their speech on occasion.

Children with cleft lip and palate have also been found to have poorer academic attainment; there could be a number of reasons for this. One theory is that children's language development is intricately related to their speech. Children who have speech difficulties are more likely to have poor phonological representation of sounds, which in turn may affect the development of their literacy and language. The relationship of speech development and language has not been well investigated to date. We know little about how the different types of cleft (e.g. whether it is both cleft lip and palate, submucousal or unilateral/bilateral, and whether it was related to a genetic syndrome) relate to the prevalence of speech and language difficulties.

The proposed project will examine the relationship between the types of cleft and parent's report of their children's speech and language development.

The specific questions that this project will investigate are:

1. What proportion of children with cleft lip and/or palate (all types) have parent reported difficulties with their speech or language at 3 years?
2. What is the relationship between cleft type and parent report of speech and language development at 3 years?
3. Is there an association between children's early speech development (parent reported) and children's language development (reported within Ages and Stages (ASQ))?