

MEDIA RELEASE

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CASLPA Celebrates World Voice Day April 16

The Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA) is celebrating World Voice Day on April 16. The theme for World Voice Day 2010, "Love Your Voice," reminds people of the value and significance of vocal health in everyday life. This initiative is supported by CASLPA's speech-language pathology members as well as other healthcare providers around the world who help individuals with voice problems.

Sound production in the larynx is an important component of speech. Speech-language pathologists (S-LPs) in Canada help individuals who are experiencing problems with their voices during speech, singing, or other vocal activities. Using behavioural, medical, and instrumental approaches in the assessment and treatment of voice problems, S-LPs often work collaboratively with other health care professionals such as otolaryngologists, psychiatrists, psychologists and physical therapists.

"Most people take their voices for granted until a problem develops," says CASLPA speech-language pathologist member Dr. Linda Rammage, Director of the Provincial Voice Care Resource Program in Vancouver, B.C. "In order to stay flexible and work properly, the vocal folds need to be well hydrated, relatively relaxed, and the sound needs to be audible to the speaker, who modifies his or her voice during speech based on acoustic feedback."

Voice problems can be caused by muscle tension; lifestyle and behavioural factors such as talking over noise and yelling; chronic physical conditions such as gastro-esophageal reflux, arthritis, dehydration and asthma; neurological diseases such as Parkinson's Disease and strokes; environmental irritants such as cigarette smoke, noise and other pollutants; invasive lesions such as human papilloma virus and cancer, and respiratory infections and viruses. In most cases, voice problems are caused by a combination of lifestyle, emotional, reflux and vocal technique factors.

"We live in a very noisy world and often people cannot hear themselves well as they speak so they tense their throat and breathing muscles," adds Rammage. "We stand on a busy street corner yelling into our cell phones or sing with the radio as we are driving in our noisy cars in traffic without thinking about the strain we are putting on our vocal folds."

Common symptoms of voice problems are chronic or intermittent hoarseness or voice breaks; dry, irritated sensation in the throat, usually exacerbated by voice use; chronic throat-clearing or cough; a sensation of effort in the throat during speech or singing; and running out of air while speaking or singing. Singers often notice a deterioration in the voice quality and a reduction in their vocal range, or difficulty singing through vocal register changes.

If you or someone you know has a communication problem or limitation, CASLPA recommends contacting a speech-language pathologist or audiologist. CASLPA represents the professional needs of more than 5,500 speech-language pathologists, audiologists and supportive personnel. For more information about the role these professionals play in the management of communication disorders or to find a speech-language pathologist or audiologist in your area, visit CASLPA's website at www.speechandhearing.ca.

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