

## Some kids can hear but don't listen

**Embargoed until: Wednesday 16 May 2012**

A significant number of children aged 6 to 18 can 'hear' everything that's said in a noisy environment, but they have trouble taking it in.

It's a problem which causes great concern to parents and teachers, and may affect up to one child in every classroom. Although these difficulties are commonly referred to as Auditory Processing Disorders (APD), the condition has never been properly understood.

Now new research is beginning to unlock the secrets of APD and take the first steps towards a treatment.

Researcher Pia Gyldenkaerne from The HEARing Cooperative Research Centre tested a group of children aged 7–12 diagnosed with APD.

"In a noisy classroom, children with APD can find it hard to comprehend the teacher's instructions. This may result in the children switching off and appearing inattentive. Their language and learning development and, in the long term, their academic performance can be affected. "

She measured their responses to sounds and to visual stimuli, recording their electrical and magnetic brain responses.

"Compared with other children in the control group, I found that different parts of their brains responded," she says. "These children can hear perfectly well and they want to learn, but they think and respond in a different way."

Ms Gyldenkaerne says that the children's listening skills in background noise were improved if they can see a complementing visual image.

"Lip-reading seems to help. In the clinic I advise teachers to place themselves so that students with APD can see their lips," she says. "The additional clues they pick up from lip-reading reinforces what they hear, and helps them understand the instructions."

Pia will discuss her research at the **annual conference of the Cooperative Research Centre Association** —'Collaborate | Innovate |2012'—being held at the **National Wine Centre of Australia in Adelaide on 15–17 May**.

She will speak at Plenary Session 3 on **Wednesday 16 May 8:30–10:30am** following addresses by Senator The Hon. Chris Evans, Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research and Simon McKeon, 2011 Australian of the Year.

### **For interview:**

Pia Gyldenkaerne, m: 0409 185 764, [pia.gyldenkaerne@mq.edu.au](mailto:pia.gyldenkaerne@mq.edu.au)

**Images: photos of a brain scan and Pia working are available**

### **Media assistance:**

Jenni Metcalfe, Econnect Communication, m: 0408 551 866, [jenni@econnect.com.au](mailto:jenni@econnect.com.au)

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