



# Editorial

## A Brief Journey of Speech and Language Pathology in Pakistan

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The academic history of speech and language pathology in Pakistan can be traced back to 2010 when Riphah International University, Islamabad, embarked on a mission to initiate the first Masters of Science in Speech and Language Pathology. Speech-language pathologists are professionals who engage in professional practice in the areas of communication and swallowing across the life span<sup>(1)</sup>.

The scope of practice entails clinical assessment and therapeutic services, prevention, advocacy, education, administration, and research from infancy through geriatrics<sup>(2)</sup>.

The course thus aimed to produce clinicians with sound Islamic ethical values, empathy and above all empirical, evidence based theoretical and clinical skills. However, it soon became apparent that the existing literature could not account for the cultural and linguistic diversity that a country such as Pakistan offers. Assessments designed in one language and based on a certain culture are not transferable to another language<sup>(3)</sup>.

This led to a quest for developing indigenous, objective, reliable and valid assessments and therapeutic tools which would be both culturally and linguistically apt.

The Speech and Language Pathology Department untiringly and persistently set upon the task to establish Urdu assessments for a diverse population ranging from children to adults. Assessments such as 'Test of Articulation and Phonology (TAPU)', 'Action Picture Test (APIT)', 'Urdu Assessment of Levels of Questioning', 'Aphasia Naming Test in Urdu', 'Aphasia Urdu Battery' are some of the assessments developed and employed today to assist with screening and diagnostic decision making.

The need for therapeutic services continues to grow in developed nations but the need in developing countries is colossal. The speech pathology department currently operates through three sites in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The first service was established at Pakistan Railway Hospital, where the quality of therapy is in par with any private setup in the country, it houses foreign qualified and experienced clinicians. The second setup has been established at WISH campus in Islamabad, which also offers foreign qualified and doctoral scholars on campus. The third service is offered through Riphah Child Development Centre, which operates as a diagnostic centre and also provides a language unit to assist children who have additional needs. In addition to onsite services, the department has recently started a free telehealth service which is in its pilot testing phase. The service has been found to be useful for patients in remote and under resourced areas who are unable to access these services in person<sup>(4)</sup>.

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Speech and language pathology graduates from Riphah are successfully employed in academic settings, hospitals, private practices, schools and special needs centers. Thesis research in Riphah has been accepted and presented in international conferences. A considerable amount of alumni have ventured into world class universities in United States, Australia, Hong Kong and New Zealand to pursue their doctoral studies. Riphah's Speech and Language Pathology Department recognizes it's responsibility as a pioneer of the graduate program by organizing continued professional development events, awareness programs, conferences and workshops attracting parents, professionals, students and members of different walks of life. By means of its commitment towards academia, research, patient care and student training, Riphah's continues to raise the rank of Speech and Language Pathology in the field Allied Health Sciences.

### References

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