



Research at Mary Hare

Joy Rosenberg reports on the wealth of research that is done at Mary Hare

‘Securing the future for deaf children and young people’, the strap line for Mary Hare, embodies the rationale behind the research that happens here.

This article represents the work of many people connected to Mary Hare. Our staff volunteer Research Committee vets all external research inquiries, and some contribute to the research body in their own right. Our school pupils participate as subjects in many projects. Our postgraduate students past and present have contributed to the body of research in education of the deaf by virtue of their dissertation writing. And the past and present faculty of our postgraduate courses affiliated to the University of Hertfordshire and Oxford Brookes University have taught, inspired and supervised dissertations for professionals in education of the deaf, educational audiology, and early years and deafness for over a decade and a half.

Postgraduate Master’s Dissertations

For the past decade and a half, a cohort of students who have completed their postgraduate diplomas opt to continue to Master’s level and complete a dissertation each year, investigating an original research question. Some have worked within their local education authority to complete a classroom-based project, others have liaised with local audiology to do a technical study, and still others have worked with nationally known researchers on a project related to that researcher’s grant or lab. To date, they have produced nearly 50 dissertations. The abstracts of two are described in more detail in this brief article, and a list of the others with links to abstracts can be found on the Mary Hare website at <http://www.maryhare.org.uk/research-publications>

In 2014, Will Potts wrote a dissertation on ‘Reasons for the non-use of hearing aids amongst hearing-impaired children aged 9-14 years who attend mainstream schools’. He reviewed literature indicating that the benefits of hearing aid amplification for school-aged children is well-established, but the topic he proposed had not been well researched. He used mixed-methods research with six participants from mainstream schools and found multi-layered reasons for non-use, principally related to stigma, and also related to listening in noise. He advised ongoing counselling especially in secondary school and improved deaf awareness training for teachers and peers.

And in 2010, Jane Hoyer wrote about 18 hearing aid refusers in mainstream secondary schools. Using quantitative methods, she found five themes emerging

that were factors for hearing aid refusers. These were visibility of deafness, lack of confidence, coping with hearing impairment, using support, and making choices. Her research showed that discussing speech-in-noise results with pupils can help them realise their need; or can help adults understand their refusal. She also found it essential to have pupil input in agreeing support levels to enable informed choice.

Research and/or publications by staff at Mary Hare

A number of the Master’s dissertations described above were completed by postgraduate students who were also teachers at Mary Hare School. Besides Master’s level work, four doctoral studies have been or are being undertaken by staff. As well, staff participate in a variety of other research opportunities. Many of these have been published in the BATOD magazine, and others as conference posters, peer-reviewed journal articles, website contributions, and BSA guidance documents and in the future potentially as MESH guides (see www.meshguides.org.uk). A few of this variety are presented below chronologically. For an entire list please see <http://www.maryhare.org.uk/research-publications>

Tinnitus in Children Practice Guidance (BSA 2015) was the result of research on the topic undertaken by a working party of which the author of this article was a member. Very little research exists at present on paediatric tinnitus. Drawing upon related research, guidelines are suggested for clinical diagnosis and management and classroom management, especially relevant to Teachers of the Deaf as tinnitus appears to be twice as common in children with hearing loss (see also the May 2015 edition of this magazine, page 11).

Phonological Awareness (PA) and Deaf Children was explored by Lorna Gravenstede in the March 2014 *BATOD Magazine*. She considered the many unanswered questions about deaf children’s PA and its relationship to literacy learning as well as differing research results in this specific area. In terms of implications for ToDs she advised optimising literacy learning using a battery of skill development tools including PA; and reviewed a published study on PA training and deaf children.

Transition from preschool to school was the topic of an e-bulletin written by Helen Nelson on Mark Marschark’s website ‘Raising and Educating a Deaf Child’ (courtesy of Oxford University Press) which aims to provide an evidence base for practice and policy. Implications for the role of the ToD include being aware of and

maximising efforts to overcome potential barriers to inclusion and curriculum access in the early years, in spite of the positive outcomes of technological advances. The e-bulletin includes a call for further research to look at effective practitioner processes and parental perceptions.

Technology to Support Learning was the topic of a May 2013 BATOD magazine article by Viv Ogg, Katherine Clements and Simon Thompson. It followed a conference workshop that allowed discussion of pros and cons of new resources for classroom use along with some hands-on use of these new technologies. The format of the workshop and article was based on a typical day at Mary Hare School, beginning with form time through to lessons, lunch time, more lessons, speech and auditory rehab therapy sessions, and after school activities. Some of the technologies covered included personal amplification monitoring devices, visualisation techniques using interactive whiteboard, e-books, reading databases, touch-typing programmes, laryngographs, lipreading and listening activities, iPad apps and an essential metal detector for locating lost hearing instruments on the playing fields.

Cortical responses as a measure of listening effort were investigated by Tracy James (nee Draper) in 2010 in conjunction with Kevin Munro, Bram Van Dun and Harvey Dillon. Her poster was presented at the British Academy of Audiology conference. She investigated whether aided cortical evoked potential measurements with speech stimuli would inform clinicians, educators and parents about the appropriateness of hearing aid fittings in cases where behavioural information or verbal feedback cannot be obtained, for example for infants or children with complex needs. This was a preliminary study and the conclusion was that more analysis needed to be done with larger groups to establish more definition about the method's usefulness, although clinicians could use likelihoods defined in the poster to supplement other information about the subject.

Research involving Mary Hare pupils as subjects

With a student body of nearly 200 children and young people who are deaf, Mary Hare commands a great deal of attention from researchers across the country who are interested in improving the quality of life and education for these children and young people with their investigations. Their studies cover a range of topics from social/emotional issues to literacy learning to listening effort. Because of the growing number of requests for access to such a unique subject base, volunteers from the staff of Mary Hare formed a Research Committee in early 2011 to vet the various project requests for mutual benefit. The purpose of this committee is to oversee and coordinate all research projects carried out across the



Researcher tests a subject from Mary Hare in the University of Southampton's mobile research unit

primary and secondary school. This is to ensure that research carried out has been considered beneficial and that the interests and time of the participating pupils are protected and respected.

Through the efforts of this committee, the subjects are carefully screened so as not to overtax them and are rewarded for their time by the researcher. The studies themselves are carefully screened to ensure the best use of subjects' time and contribution to the field.

A few of this variety are described below. For an entire list please see <http://www.maryhare.org.uk/research-publications>

Catherine Barnett and Ros Herman from City University London in 2014 worked at Mary Hare on their research related to deaf children and dyslexia. Because of the lack of reading tests particularly designed to assess deaf children, they aim to develop standardised reading tests to check progress for deaf children.

Margaret Harris and Emmanouela Terlektsi in 2009 with the help pupils from Mary Hare and other schools as subjects explored the reading and spelling abilities of deaf adolescents. They found differences in educational setting and type of hearing instrument used impacted reading levels which were not predicted by age of diagnosis or degree of hearing loss.

Terezinha Nunes and cohorts piloted games at Mary Hare in 2006 related to working memory intervention.

She wrote that Mary Hare have been very helpful over the years and that there have been many publications about the different aspects of the work she carried out with the support of the pupils (some in the BATOD magazine). One of these such studies (2008) established that deaf children could benefit from instruction that supports use of informal mathematics knowledge; and another proposed a relatively successful intervention.

Conclusion

Translational research, applying scientific conclusion to real-world practice, has become a centrepiece for government, academic and even industrial investment. It goes a long way toward helping professions, indeed our very own ToD profession, consider why we do what we do. For some excellent examples, see www.meshguides.org. Mary Hare staff and students are at the forefront of translational research related to deafness, working jointly with audiologists, educators and researchers across the country and beyond to contribute to the body of literature which will help to see this generation of deaf children and young people securely into their future.

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References – For a full list, please see <http://www.maryhare.org.uk/research-publications>

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