Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) – Obscure Auditory Dysfunction (OAD)

Auditory Processing Disorder, more commonly referred to as Obscure Auditory Dysfunction (OAD) is a relatively recently recognised condition that we do not understand a lot about. It is estimated that between 5-10% of adults overall have it. The main complaint is difficulty hearing speech in noisy places. It can run in families or be associated with low confidence in hearing particularly during a stressful period.

Some individuals may have subtle differences in the way that brain cells send messages to each other. This may make it hard for sounds to be passed on to the areas of the brain which help understand language. It is possible such brain cell differences may cause APD. There are no drugs or procedures which 'cure' this condition, but there are things that can be done to help improve listening for the individual, friends and family.

Useful hearing tactics

The use of good hearing tactics can help an individual understand conversation when listening conditions are difficult. The following suggestions may help:

- Cut out or turn down interfering noise where possible
- Ensure enough light is on the face of the speaker to help make the most of visual cues from speech/lip reading and facial expressions
- Tell the speaker the circumstances are making it difficult for you to hear. Ask them to speak more clearly
- If you don't catch what someone says the first time, don't be afraid to ask them to repeat it or say it in a different way.
- Try to keep calm. If you become anxious or flustered, it will be harder for you to follow what's being said.

Further information and hearing tactics can be found on the following websites:

http://www.deafnessresearch.org.uk
http://www.apduk.org/
http://www.ihr.mrc.ac.uk

(Adapted from Medical Research Council)