

The Immeasurable Value of Communication

A Few Words From Our Chairman

As we've emerged from lockdown, we have been reminded, occasionally all too vividly, that human interaction and communication are part of the human condition. We bump into people, we chat freely and openly, and we come away better informed and happier. We have yet to find out whether or not the damage done to children who were denied education and human interaction during lockdown will be permanent, but we know that the issue is deep and costly.

For many people that easy interaction - that so many of us take for granted and that is so much a part of the joy of everyday life - has never been a reality. If you have a stammer, your ability to engage with other humans is constantly frustrated.

This is why the work that the Dominic Barker Trust funds is so important.

Those who were at the quiz last year will recall how well Birtan Demirel spoke about the work that he is doing at St Anne's College, Oxford. Despite having a stammer, he had been able to record his speech on his mobile phone beforehand and play it back through his headphones while he spoke. Nobody listening to him would have known that he had a stammer and, through his own resourcefulness, he has been able to develop a strategy resulting in him being able to address a large group of people fluently. You can read more about his work further in this newsletter.

Also in this newsletter, you will be able to read about the valuable and important research work of Dr Vaughan Parsons and Dr Clare Butler that the Trust is funding.

Thank you all for your continued support of, and interest in, the work of The Dominic Barker Trust. We are making a real difference to peoples' lives and moving ever closer to a true understanding of the causes and effects of stammering. As a charity, we do not carry any overheads and all our funds go to supporting the various projects that you will read about in this newsletter. Without the support of our friends, we would, in turn, be unable to support these projects. We are enormously grateful.



Toby Kramers

RESEARCH SUPPORTED BY THE TRUST

Stammering, Women and Work



Dr Clare Butler

Dr Clare Butler, Senior Lecturer in Work and Employment at Newcastle University, is currently undertaking a research project funded by the Trust entitled 'Stammering, Women and Work'. Clare's research aims to learn of the experiences of women at work and has the express aim of reducing prejudice and improving the working lives of women who stammer.

In adulthood, men are significantly more likely to stammer than women. This makes women who stammer a minority within a minority group; as such, their experiences, Clare has learnt, have been woefully neglected.

Following her review of current knowledge in the area, Clare interviewed 19 women who stammer. Analysis of the interviews is in the early stages, with emergent ideas being considered in light of prior studies in the work/employment literature and wider literatures across a range of academic fields.

As this analytic work develops, Clare will seek to present her work at academic conferences, such as Gender, Work and Organization, the British Sociological Association, Critical Management Studies and the British Academy of Management. Attendance at academic conferences will be an extremely important aspect of the project, as it will offer Clare invaluable challenges to her emerging ideas and theories. Her final decisions on which conferences to attend will depend on the main arguments that her research throws up, and she will match these arguments with conference themes.

With the support of the Dominic Barker Trust, this research project hopes to make a genuine contribution not only to the academic debates on the subject of women who stammer, but also to the working lives of these women.

The Neurobiology of Stammering & Improvements to Fluency

The Trust is delighted to have been funding Birtan Demirel's PhD at St Anne's college, Oxford since the autumn of 2021, where he is supervised by Professor Kate Watkins and Professor Charlotte Stagg. Birtan's research includes several very valuable strands, including:

- Analysis of the incomplete cerebral dominance theory in people who stammer. Findings show no discernible differences in language lateralisation. This study will shortly be submitted to a scientific journal. Last year Birtan won an award at the 8th International Speech Motor Control Conference for this work.

- Mega-analysis of 4 studies into differences in brain activity during sentence repetition in people who stammer. Preliminary findings suggest functional differences in the brain linked to speech-motor control. This study has been approved for presentation at the 13th Oxford Dysfluency Conference.

- Evaluation of the efficacy of transcranial alternating current stimulation (tACS) combined with theta-gamma phase-amplitude coupling in enhancing sensorimotor learning during speech production. Pilot testing has commenced and in-principle acceptance has been received from the Neurobiology of Language journal.

- Investigations into the pioneering methods Birtan has developed for eliminating stammering during presentations, and which he demonstrated at the Trust Quiz Night last year. Pilot testing and data collecting began during the summer and 5 out of 7 participants have utilised the method successfully so far. Data collection will be completed by the new year. Once the study is published, Birtan aims to create an instructional video for sharing on digital media platforms so that, potentially, thousands of others can benefit from it.

- Recording of brain activity while individuals who stammer engage in tasks related to the timing of movements and articulation and investigating brain activity just before speech, to discover differences between stammered and fluent utterances. Structural MRI scans are acquired and quantitative analysis of brain tissue is conducted to investigate the concentration of iron levels in the basal ganglia - a region important for movement initiation. Once complete by the end of the year, this study will also be submitted to a scientific journal.

- Working alongside Dr Oiwi Parker Jones, using advanced machine-learning techniques to decode speech from brain activity and uncover the hidden effort and brain activity that those who stammer experience before initiating speech.

In addition to his research, Birtan continues to offer tutorials in Neurophysiology to undergraduates in Oxford. He has been invited to lecture Master's students in Neurophysiology of Speech and Language at the University of Pavia in Italy. He is initiating a stammering meet-up group in Oxford and will be delivering a presentation about his research on eliminating stammering during public speaking to St Anne's College alumni at Oxford's "Meeting Minds" Weekend.



Birtan Demirel

Supporting NHS Staff who Stammer

The Trust is proud and delighted to continue to fund Dr Vaughan Parsons' work investigating the impact of stammering within the NHS workforce. Dr Parsons (PhD) is research manager and senior research fellow in the Occupational Health Service at St Thomas' Hospital in London and centre manager for the London Centre for Work and Health. You might remember that the Trust funded his initial research work, beginning in January 2020. In 2021 this developed, with additional funding from the Workplace Disability Equality team at NHS England / NHS Improvement, into the establishment of a new NHS Stammering Network for staff and their managers, of which Vaughan is part of the leadership team.

The NHS Stammering Network currently supports 127 members.

The Network includes a bespoke website for staff and managers to access information and resources on stammering (<https://nhsstammeringnetwork.uk/>) and provides 1-2-1 workplace mentoring and support to NHS employees who stammer. Vaughan reports that in the past 18 months the Network has also been able to run a number of webinar sessions on topics such as Disclosure in the Workplace,



Dr Vaughan Parsons

Stammering in Young Children and Public Speaking in the Workplace involving experts in these fields. He is pleased to report that these sessions have been very positively received and that he plans to run more regular online social meetings with Network members in the coming months.

The Trust continues to provide sustainability funding for the Network, including website hosting costs, psychologist salary costs for 1-2-1 peer mentor supervision and adult speech and language therapist costs.

In March of this year Vaughan was invited to present an overview of his research and of the Network at the Health and Wellbeing at Work conference in Birmingham and he has submitted an abstract to present an overview of his work and the Network at the 34th International Congress on Occupational Health in Morocco next year.

CALLING ALL NEW RESEARCH APPLICATIONS!

Have an idea? Since the Dominic Barker Trust's creation in 1997, we've sought to fund projects with practical applications which are led, supported or supervised by recognised academic or other institutions, including start-up funding for new initiatives. We remain keen to receive applications from a wide basis, and will look to seed-fund via small grants as well as funding larger projects. If you have an idea for a project, to be undertaken at a recognised institution, please get in touch via enquiries@dominicbarkertrust.org.uk and send us a 200-word summary as a pre-application step. The Trustees will then indicate whether they'd like to receive a full application. The full range of our research projects past and present can be found on our website.

FUNDRAISING

OUR 2023 CHRISTMAS CARD AND GREETINGS CARD

A long-term supporter of the Trust was the wonderful photographer, the late Russell Edwards. Our 2023 double-sided card features his photography of a Great Crested Grebe with its chicks on one side and a Chiff Chaff on the other. These new cards are now available via our website both with a Christmas message and without for use as blank greetings cards. A pack of 10 cards with envelopes costs £5. The 10 beautiful designs that we have released for sale in previous years are also available in packs of 10 on our website at www.dominicbarkertrust.org.uk/cards-for-sale



Our latest greetings cards



OKLAHOMA!

On two beautiful July evenings last year, the celebrated D'Oyly Tarte Theatre Company gave two memorably brilliant sing-a-long performances of Oklahoma! at the spectacular location of Crowe Hall on the edge of the river Stour. Our chairman was part of the cast and the Company very generously donated funds to the Trust from the proceeds.

A big thank you goes out from the Trust to the cast, crew and audience.



BEFORE

ANOTHER CLOSE SHAVE

Craig Harvey has done it again... heroically losing three years of beard growth to fundraise for the Trust.

We are extremely grateful to him for making this significant sacrifice again! As a child Craig had a slight speech impediment. He has since outgrown this but remembers well the difficulties and anxieties he experienced interacting with others.

Thank you, Craig.



AFTER

FUNDRAISING

QUIZ NIGHT



A huge thank you to those who were able to join us for the Dom's Fund Quiz Night in April last year, held in the splendid surroundings of the Royal Hospital School's Jellicoe Room. With your help we raised over £2,200.

Our chairman, Toby, was a fabulous Quiz Master - fully testing our wits with fiendish questions. The Royal Hospital School produced a delicious and plentiful dinner that satisfied both the gourmets and the gourmands among us.

The highlight of the evening, however, was undoubtedly Birtan Demirel's talk about the fascinating research work funded by the Trust that he is doing at Oxford University. As mentioned in our chairman Toby's introduction, the ingenious method that Birtan has developed for public speaking was enabling him to address us fluently. What he had to say, and the way he said it, made a big impression on all of us.

We're already looking forward to the next quiz in the Spring of next year, and we hope to see you there!

WHAT IS DOM'S FUND?

The Dominic Barker Trust, a charity known as Dom's Fund, was set up in 1997 in memory of Dominic Barker, who had a persistent stammer and who took his own life in 1994, aged 26. The primary aim of Dom's Fund is to fund research into stammering, with a view to the development of effective support to people who stammer and their families.

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OUR TRUSTEES

The work of the Trust would not be possible without a dedicated board of Trustees who ensure that our work is carried out responsibly and cost-effectively and that it meets the stated objectives and aims. The Trustees – who come from different backgrounds and bring a wide range of skills and experience with them - also work tirelessly to support fundraising initiatives and to promote the cause. We are enormously grateful to our two outgoing Trustees, Ian Angus and Dr Sally Williams, for their many years of wisdom and involvement and would like to officially welcome our two new Trustees, Sarah Aggett and Norbert Lieckfeld, and to thank them very much for joining us.



Toby Kramers,
Chairman



Norbert
Lieckfeld



Eleanor
Barker



Guy Barker



Dr Steve Davis
OBE



Chloe
Chancellor



Sarah Aggett

The Trustees are grateful to:

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HOW TO SUPPORT US

The trust is entirely dependent on the generosity of its contributors. You can make a donation:

- ONLINE: At www.dominicbarkertrust.org.uk where you will be redirected to the Just Giving site.
- BY EMAIL: enquiries@dominicbarkertrust.org.uk
- BY POST: Send a cheque.
- BY PHONE: 01473 328530
- TWITTER: @stammerresearch

Your donations are used only to fund research and activities related to research projects. The Trust has minimal overheads; it has no employees, owns no property or vehicles and the administration is done freely by Trustees and volunteers.

General Data Protection Regulations 2018 - Privacy Notice

The above Regulations came into effect on 25 May 2018, and this notice is to reassure all supporters, volunteers and grant applicants that your data privacy is protected. We hold only personal names, contact details and information about donations to and grants from the Dominic Barker Trust. All this information has been volunteered by you and is held by the trust for administration in order to support research into the causes of stammering. The trustees will not use this information for any other purpose (or disclose it to third parties) or hold it for longer than necessary. If you would like to know about the data we hold, or to amend or delete it, please contact the trust in writing or by email: enquiries@dominicbarkertrust.org.uk

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