

Software shows promise for speech disorders

September 13 2007



Ms Waite and Elizabeth test the new software

Children with speech, language and reading disorders may soon be able to be treated remotely by using a UQ-designed telerehabilitation system.

The PC-based system, allows speech pathologists to assess and treat children living in rural and remote areas via the internet.

The system, consisting of webcams, headsets, a robotic arm, touchscreen and computer, was designed by the Telerehabilitation Research Unit in UQ's School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences.

UQ Speech pathology PhD student Monique Waite said preliminary results using the system were encouraging.

Ms Waite said a pilot study found ratings of speech and oral motor

functions made over the Internet were the same as face-to-face ratings more than 90 percent of the time.

The 24-year-old from McDowall said ratings of language skills of 12 children online matched face-to-face ratings with almost 100 percent agreement.

Ms Waite and her team need suitable volunteers to further test the system to determine if it is possible to assess and treat speech, language and reading disorders over the Internet.

She said they were seeking children with difficulties in speech, language, or literacy to participate, including:

- Delayed speech, aged 4-9 years
- Delayed language, aged 5-9 years
- Reading difficulties, aged 8-13 years

Participation involves a free screening assessment conducted by a qualified speech pathologist either across the Internet between two rooms or face-to-face at UQ.

The session will take between one and one-and-a-half hours and a report of the child's results will be provided.

Source: UQ

Citation: Software shows promise for speech disorders (2007, September 13) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2007-09-software-speech-disorders.html>

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