

FOREWORD

This issue of *Seminars in Speech and Language* is unlike any other you may have read. In some ways it is a grand rounds of challenging diagnostic cases in which much of the diagnostic detective work of the authors is described as a mystery, as if a latent Raymond Chandler or Agatha Christie lurks within many speech-language pathologists. Together, these case studies present converging illustrations of the striking parallels between diagnostic problem-solving and the methods of science. Clinicians, like scientists, formulate alternative diagnoses or hypotheses to account for a patient's signs and symptoms, for the former, or some unexplained natural phenomena, for the latter. Then, each goes about collecting the information needed to disprove one or more of the alternative diagnoses or hypotheses that were formulated. In time, both are able to draw defensible diagnostic or scientific conclusions. So, this issue is entertaining as well as informative. In fact, it's a hoot to read!

The guest editor, Dr. Thomas F. Campbell of the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh and the University of Pittsburgh, deserves full credit for both the topic and the style of the issue. My contribution was the inspiration to telephone Dr. Campbell to see if he would develop an issue of challenging grand round cases for an issue of *Seminars in Speech and Language*. After some thought, he said that he was interested in editing an issue that focused on the cognitive, decision-making processes of expert clinicians who are faced with substantial uncertainty about the specific nature, cause, or prognosis of the communication problem presented. In

some ways, therefore, this issue is a series of clinical parables, each of which conveys important diagnostic lessons.

I hope that readers will not permit the tongue-in-cheek style of the articles in this issue to obscure the significance of the clinical issues that are addressed. To set the stage for what follows, and with apologies to Tony Hillerman, I should relate how my inspiration to call Dr. Campbell came about:

I still remember the hot, dry wind against my face, as it whipped sand through the gnarled limbs of a honey mesquite guarding the patio wall. A flash of lightning to the southwest, much too distant to hear the thunder, signaled the promise of an evening shower. To the east, a full moon rising over the Rincons was tinting the desert foothills in muted shades of gray. Moving slowly from the shadows of the patio, I wandered into the kitchen, still at a loss for what to do or whom to call. Glancing briefly at the pantry, I paused, then looked more closely at the cans neatly aligned along the top shelf; hmmm, Campbell's Soup. After days of uncertainty and frustration, relief slowly flooded my body, lifting my lips in a smile as I returned to the patio thinking that I would call Tom Campbell in the morning.

Well, that's my story of the inspiration that spurred the development of this issue. The rest is for Dr. Campbell and his elite squad of diagnostic detectives to tell.

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Editor-in-Chief