

PREFACE

On August 16, 1994, dyslexia and language-learning disabilities made headlines in the *New York Times* science section. The feature article, "New Clue to Cause of Dyslexia Seen in Mishearing of Fast Sounds," cited research by Dr. Paula Tallal published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. It also discussed research by Drs. Albert Galaburda and Margaret Livingstone, and Dr. Michael Merzenich. The author of the article commented, "Although brain researchers . . . praise it [the study] highly, most dyslexia experts have not had time to assess the new claims."

To me this was a marker day. Those of us who have worked with children, adolescents, and adults with language-learning disabilities for decades and have stressed the importance of central auditory processing and auditory memory have often felt what Dr. Tallal expressed as "being on the fringe." I think this can be said to be true of several of the contributors to this issue on adolescent language disorders. These new findings also remind us that there are still uncharted territories in learning disabilities and that this issue is only a step in the process of exploration.

Dr. Melvin Levine and his associates have probably influenced the recognition of learning disabilities, including language-learning disabilities, by the medical professions more than anyone else. I thought immediately of Dr. Levine as the natural author of an introductory chapter for this issue, because of his theoretical and intuitive knowledge and visions. You will find that Dr. Levine and Dr. James Montgomery provide an overview of the nature and characteristics of language-learning disabilities in adolescence, that is broad in scope and scholarly in execution. It also ties many of

the recent scientific findings in the field to the practical level.

The chapter on adolescent language assessments provided me with a first opportunity to present my perspectives and discuss diverse assessment procedures and outcomes. I recognize that my name is firmly associated with norm-referenced assessment. What my colleagues generally do not know is that I also try to be an eclectic and pragmatic diagnostician and clinician and that my work has its origin in personal experiences with dyslexia, albeit of the visual processing persuasion. It was a pleasure for me to have space in this issue to consolidate and integrate my perspectives on adolescent assessment.

Because adolescents with preexisting learning disabilities are frequent casualties in accidents that result in traumatic brain injury (TBI), that topic also needed to be covered. Who better to invite to cover it than Dr. Mark Ylvisaker with his in-depth theoretical and practical knowledge of the field and outstanding ability to synthesize. Dr. Ylvisaker and his collaborator, Timothy Feeney, provide a benchmark for the characteristics and needs of preadolescents and adolescents after TBI, and for service delivery.

One perspective on classroom language intervention that speech-language pathologists rarely hear is that held by a special educator who teaches a class of adolescents with language-learning disabilities. Mrs. Evelyn Freedman was honored as 1993 Teacher of the Year in Canada. She is the recipient of the 1993–94 Joan Kershaw Publication Award from the Canadian Council for Exceptional Children for *The WORD Book*. Our extensive collaboration via long-distance communications led to my co-authorship of the article. In it, we focus on

a specific intervention objective, that of building understanding of precepts and key concepts for equity of access to and learning from curriculum subjects. Mrs. Freedman has provided the why, the theoretical how, as well as the practical how to implement language intervention in a special education classroom setting for adolescents. I wish you could visit her class to see theory-to-application come alive.

Dr. Candice Bray was a leader in developing a service program for students with learning disabilities at Boston University's College of Basic Studies and Special Student Services Center. She now serves on the Professional Advisory Board for Boston University's Martin Luther King Student Services. Dr. Bray exemplifies individualization of intervention for adolescents and young adults with language-learning disabili-

ties. She has earned a reputation for being an outstanding diagnostician, clinician-educator, and consultant to educational settings that serve adolescents and young adults with learning disabilities. Her article focuses on developing study skills and learning strategies. It combines how-to suggestions with references to background sources. It should serve as a practical day-to-day reference for the speech-language pathologist who is working with learning-disabled junior high, high school, or college students.

It is my hope that you, the reader, will find this issue varied, practical, and worth your time. I feel honored to have been invited to edit it.

Elisabeth H. Wiig, Ph.D.