

## My Speech is Fine, So Why Would My Doctor Recommend Speech Therapy?

When clients come to outpatient rehabilitation for physical therapy or occupational therapy, they usually come with specific goals in mind, such as reducing pain, regaining lost function or improving mobility. I have found that many clients who come for outpatient speech therapy, enter the office and the first thing they say to me when we sit down is, “I have no idea why my doctor sent me here, I can speak just fine.”



A common misconception is that speech therapists (speech language pathologists) are limited to the school setting and work on sound production, such as helping with a “lisp” or “stutter.” In fact, speech therapists get a two-year master’s degree focusing on a much larger scope of practice across the life span from childhood to adults. Speech therapists who work in the adult setting evaluate and treat communication disorders, cognitive disorders, voice disorders and swallowing disorders. Referrals for speech therapy often come from primary care physicians, neurologists, ENTs, pulmonologists and GI doctors. Changes in communication, cognition, voice and swallowing often occur after a neurological event, such as a stroke, but can also occur with progressive neurological disorders or often occur over time due to aging.

If you have noticed mild changes with communication, cognition, voice and swallowing, many times it is part of the normal aging process; however, if these changes occur suddenly or get to a point where it impacts daily life, consider speaking with your physician. Speech therapists can often help with educating individuals about compensatory strategies, modifying behaviors or even exercises to improve muscle strength with voice and swallowing.



## **Michelle Nandipati, MS, CCC-SLP**

Michelle Nandipati has a masters degree in Speech Language Pathology from the University of Washington with a certification in Lee Silverman Voice Therapy. Michelle works with a wide variety of patients in outpatient, inpatient and at the skilled nursing facility for swallowing, voice, speech and cognitive therapy. Outside of work Michelle enjoys traveling, dancing and outdoor activities.