



## IASLT Position Statement on the Rapid Prompting Method.

May 2017

# Statement

The *Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists* (IASLT) is the recognised professional body for speech and language therapists (SLTs) in Ireland. One of the key functions of the IASLT is to represent the views of its members to inform public policy in relation to the provision of speech and language therapy services for the best interests of service users.

Since the broadcast of the RTE documentary 'Autism and Me' on March 13<sup>th</sup> 2017 there has been much discussion about the Rapid Prompting Method (RPM) which was used to facilitate communication for one teenage boy featured on the programme. IASLT wish to put on record our position in relation to this method - primarily our concern that there is no evidence to support its use.

Over the years, Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) has been the target for many anecdotal commercial 'cures' and interventions. These continue to be readily available despite having no scientific or empirical evidence in efficacy. Assessment and treatment protocols for communication disorders should be based in the most part on empirical evidence from well-constructed and independent research. RPM has yet to produce any of this to support its claims. IASLT's concern is that as a method it is closely related to the technique known as: "Facilitated Communication" (FC) which has been proven to be ineffective and not evidence based. Peer reviewed publications about FC report that the children's outputs were results of the facilitators' movements and opinions – not those of the children's themselves. In fact, FC was found to constitute: "immediate threats to the individual civil and human

rights" of the person being facilitated:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/07/a-controversial-method-for-aut-ism-communication/491810/>

As trained experts in the areas of speech, language and communication development, SLTs work collaboratively with children and their families to develop communication systems using verbal and non-verbal language, including low and high tech aids. This can be a lengthy process with the aim to meet the diverse individual needs of each child and his/her family.

Through the practice of peer reviewed research, IASLT members are bound by their Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics. It is the duty of the SLT to keep up to date with evidence-based clinical approaches, recent literature in their field, and practices carried out by their peers (IASLT, 2015). This better serves their clients, prevents harm and halts the proliferation of pseudoscience. It also ensures that each SLT practices within ethical principles e.g. beneficence - there will be some benefit to the individual (IASLT, 2015). FC and its variants such as RPM, remain illegitimate and ultimately undermine the voices of individuals with communication impairments.

IASLT wish to appeal to carers, service providers and senior members of the Government and the HSE who are responsible for funding and developing services not to put energies and already strained financial resources into supporting invalidated and pseudoscientific practices.

Parents and children living with ASD deserve our support. They also deserve the benefit of our skills and knowledge. They deserve that we highlight

ineffective "therapies" which thrive on their despair and fear and direct them towards interventions that are grounded in robust research.

IASLT Council 2017

## REFERENCES

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