

Welcome to another edition of

# AIR FLOW

Number BW7, September 2010

Edited by Bruce Whitfield, Canterbury Branch Member.

## EDITOR'S COMMENTS

### CONGRATULATIONS

To Stephen Hoare-Vance for gaining a 12-month contract to teach English in Tangshan, China. This is a city of 7million people somewhere between Beijing & the Chinese coastline. I would like to think that his association with the NZ Speak Easy group, & his attendance at courses, have all been instrumental in making this adventurous step possible. I feel sure that all Speak Easy members will join me in wishing Stephen good luck & good fluency in this challenging appointment. Hopefully Stephen will keep in regular contact with us & share some of his wonderful new cultural experiences with our group. Way to go Stephen!

### MOVIE WORTH WATCHING

Have you watched the movie called "My Cousin Vinnie"? Nina & I have. We thought it is a really entertaining movie, well worth viewing. It has a good story line, is easy to follow, & has a nice happy ending. Why I mention it is because towards the end a new character is introduced, in the role of a male Public Attorney (yes, it is an American movie). When he gets into the courtroom he plays the role of a fairly severe stutterer & a figure of fun.

We thought he played the part quite true to character. He may have watched people who actually stutter in real life. Of course, we related to him extremely well. I noticed that looking at & listening to a person who stutters does not make me squirm, or feel embarrassed & self-conscious any more. I guess I have gone through a process of desensitization over the many years that I have been involved with speech therapy.

Three points I would like to make:

1. Good on the actor for being bold enough to take the part & portraying the character so realistically. As we all know it is very challenging for fluent speakers to have to stutter on purpose in front of others.
2. I hope viewers do not get the impression that people who stutter should be regarded as figures of fun. Let's hope they see it as an affliction that can be a real problem to a number of people in many everyday situations.
3. Good on the makers of the movie for being so open about displaying a disability that many of us try to hide, but genuinely does exist in the real world.

### INTERNATIONAL STUTTERING AWARENESS DAY

This day is celebrated on 22<sup>nd</sup> October each year. Ask what your branch can do to help publicise this occasion. What can you do as an individual to recognise the day?

Get adverts into community newspapers & magazines.

Pin Speak Easy brochures to notice boards.

Phone talkback radio.

The Canterbury Branch will be manning a table at the Westfield Mall in Riccarton. Maybe you can even attract new members into our group. Whatever you do, at least do something to help yourself with your speech, plus share information about the benefits of working hard towards greater fluency.

### CHECK OUT THIS WEBSITE

<http://couragetostutter.net/wp/>

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# TECHNIQUE CORNER

## BEFORE YOU EVEN BEGIN TO SPEAK.....

DO NOT HURRY into speaking. All people who stutter, & many so-called normal fluent speakers should give themselves time to prepare for speaking. After all, speaking is the act of verbally conveying our thoughts & feelings to our listener(s). It is also a way of expressing our true character.

Stutterers, in general, are anxious about the act of speaking & therefore hold a considerable amount of tension in their body. Especially in the muscles which control the mechanics of breathing & speaking; i.e. the diaphragm, the intercostal muscles (between the ribs), the muscles around the vocal cords, & the muscles that operate the articulators (jaw, tongue & lips).

By not speaking the moment that we think we should, we give ourselves time to relax all these muscles. This is simply done by consciously fully exhaling. No doubt you have all heard a stressed-out & up-tight person doing this as a matter of course. Go on, try it! Let out all that breath with an “ahhhhhh” sound. Makes you feel a little better doesn't it?

Give yourself permission not to rush into speaking. Don't start to speak just because you perceive your listener is impatiently waiting for you to speak. NOW is the time to take control of your speaking situations. A calm & collected speaker maintains their dignity & commands respect.

A pause before speaking gives a person who stutters time to remind themselves to use good technique, & to quickly run through what that technique involves, & how to apply it.

A pause before speaking allows us to adequately think about what we are going to say. We should make sure we say what we WANT to say. It should be clear & concise, & contain no ums or ahs or filler words like “you know” & “actually”. If you substitute perceived difficult words for perceived easier words, you run the risk of confusion in the brain & changing the meaning of your utterance. DON'T do it! Stick with the correct words for the situation. When formulation is complete, mentally say it to yourself first. Decide HOW you are going to say it. Be assertive, & put some good intonation into your voice.

Early on during this pre-speaking process you should establish good eye contact with those whom you are about to speak to. Use it as a concentration point. Don't let your mind wander or lose eye contact. This will help you feel powerful & strong, & keep you on track for a well-controlled delivery. Lastly, be considerate to your listeners. If you are respectful to them, they are almost certain to return the favour.

If you have done all the technique practice that has been recommended, you should be feeling pretty confident that your speech is going to go well. Having a positive mind-set is just one more thing to focus on, before you actually go to speak. Remember, good preparation & much practice is the key to a successful

outcome. Oh yes, one more thing; it costs nothing to have a reassuring smile on your face, so do it! It may not cost, but it will probably pay. Happy speaking.

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# STUTTERING AND ANXIETY

by Janine Diehl

I have always asked myself whether people who stutter experience greater speech anxiety than their peers. This question brought me all the way from Germany to New Zealand where I started my Masters of Speech and Language Therapy (MLST) in February 2010.

I have been receiving great help and support from my supervisors Mike Robb, John Lewis & Tika Ormond. I am very proud to say that I became a fully graduated qualified speech-language therapist after finishing my Bachelors in Germany in 2009. I worked for a short while in a clinic for children with language and developmental disorders before undertaking my master's degree.

I now have the pleasure of pursuing in depth research in the area of stuttering, while also being able to enjoy the beauty of this great country "at the bottom of the world". New Zealand's landscape and the kindness of its inhabitants has always been appealing to me!

Why undertaking research in stuttering? And why anxiety? Past literature has historically shown that adults who stutter tend to have increased levels of anxiety compared to adults who don't stutter, particularly in social interactions (Messenger, Onslow, Packman, & Menzies, 2004). However, most of this research only addresses the level of "perceived" anxiety in adults who stutter in different speaking situations, based mostly on questionnaires. But features of social anxiety can also be examined using a more objective measurement of the actual physiological effects of anxiety. My research is designed to determine if this objective measurement confirms a person's self perception of anxiety.

The first step in my research involved a lot of planning of the methodology. I am looking at the physiological effects of anxiety and perceptual judgments of communication apprehension across different speaking situations. The physiological measure I am using is based on examining cortisol levels in saliva samples. What are cortisol levels and what do they show us? The body

discharges a special steroid (called cortisol) when anxiety arouses which we are able to measure with the salivette methodology by chewing on a saliva roll for a few seconds.

The next step in my research was to find participants from all over Christchurch and the South Island. I am examining people who stutter as well as people who don't stutter. This could not have been possible without the support of the local Speak Easy Group. In total, I have collected data of 22 participants (11 in each group).

These participants ranged on age between 19-62 years. Each participant was required to come to our laboratory five days in a row and provide a salivary cortisol sample in different speaking situations consisting of (1) speaking with a friend, (2) speaking with a stranger, (3) speaking in front of a small group and (4) making a telephone call to a travel agency. Each participant also had to rate their anxiety levels according to the situation before and after fulfilling the speaking tasks on a 10-point rating scale. A lot of talking and sharing of experiences on stuttering has taken place.

At this time, the saliva samples have been delivered to a local biochemist (Dr. John Lewis) who will perform the cortisol analysis. Soon I will be analysing the data to find out if a relationship exists between self perception and physical events which are taking place when anxiety arouses, as well as a comparison between the anxiety levels of people who stutter to people who don't stutter.

In closing, I wish to thank Bruce Whitfield and all of the Speak Easy Members for their enthusiastic and persistent support in helping me finding participants and availing them each for one week. Without their support this study could not have taken place.

tēnā koutou and all the best...

# STUTTERING RESEARCH

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SALIVARY CORTISOL LEVELS AND SELF PERCEPTION

Nina Clark-Whitfield

Janine Diehl, a Masters' Student in the Department of Communication Disorders at the University of Canterbury came along with her supervisor, Professor Mike Robb, to a Canterbury Speak Easy meeting on 3 June 2010, to invite members to participate in her research project. The aim of her research is to investigate whether persons who stutter have different anxiety levels in various speaking situations than persons who do not stutter. For her comparison she would interview ten people who stutter and ten persons who do not stutter. The ten participants who do not stutter would carry out the same speaking tasks as those who do stutter. Both groups would have their saliva collected before speaking tasks and afterwards. The samples, once analyzed, would determine whether cortisol levels from stutterers' saliva were markedly different from those who do not stutter. There were to be five sessions with Janine for both groups.

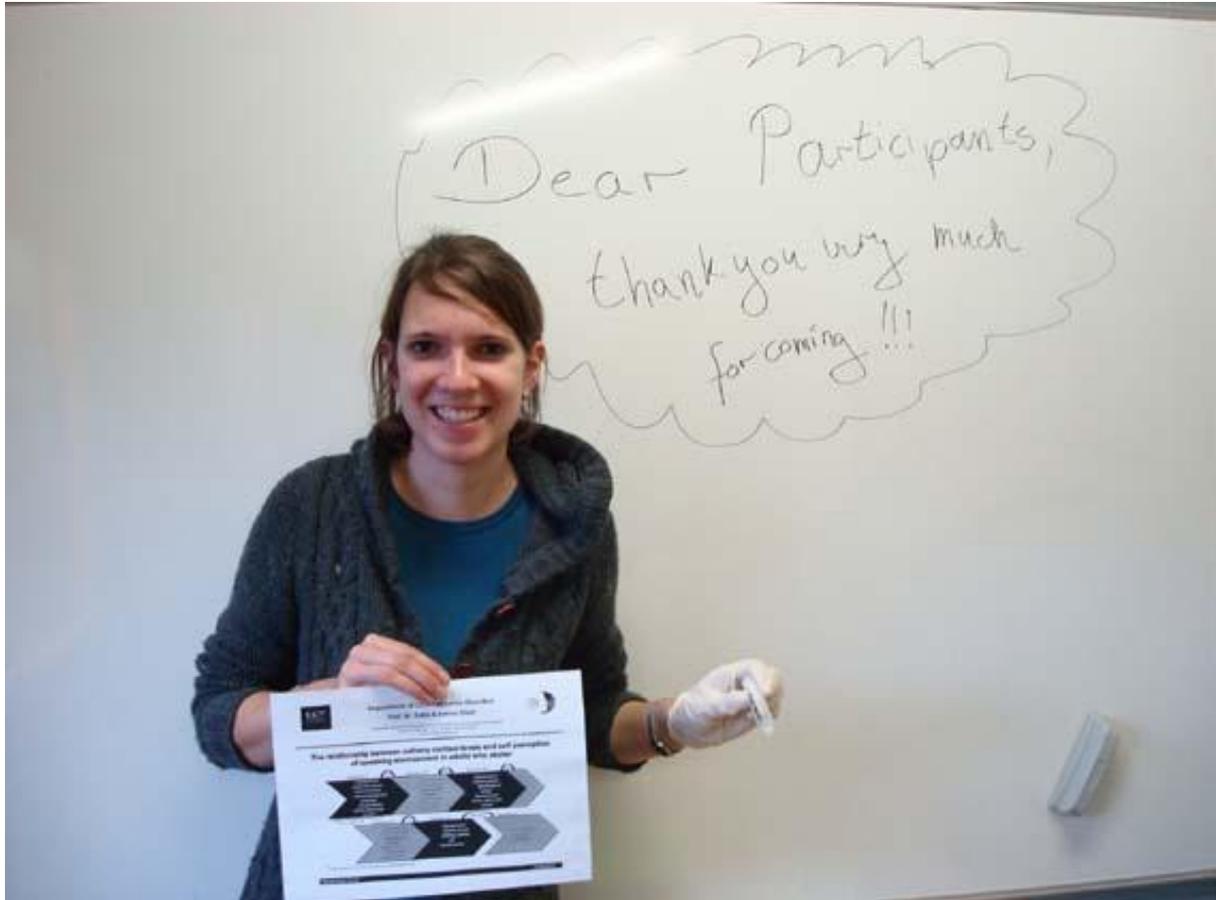
The tasks required were:

- Speaking with a Stranger
- Speaking with a group
- Speaking with a friend
- Making a phone call

The first session was to provide a saliva sample and then be pre-warned about the speaking situation for the next day. Before the designated speaking task was done, a saliva sample was taken. Once the task was completed another saliva sample was taken. After each session, the next day's speaking situation was announced. These saliva samples which were collected by chewing on a piece of cotton roll for approx 30-60 seconds, were to be frozen and stored for later analysis by someone working at the Christchurch Public Hospital. At the last session, a comprehensive questionnaire about stuttering was given to each participant stutterer to answer.

From the Canterbury Speak Easy Group, several members eagerly volunteered to participate in Janine's project. It involved five 45-minute sessions at the Department of Communication Disorders over five consecutive days. Before and after the pre-warned speaking situation, a questionnaire was given to stutterers: the first to determine self-perceived severity of stuttering in each speaking situation, and the second, after the speaking task, to examine perceived anxiety levels in each of the four speaking tasks. Janine also attended a McGuire Programme support group meeting one evening where she explained her research and encouraged more people who stutter to become involved with her study.

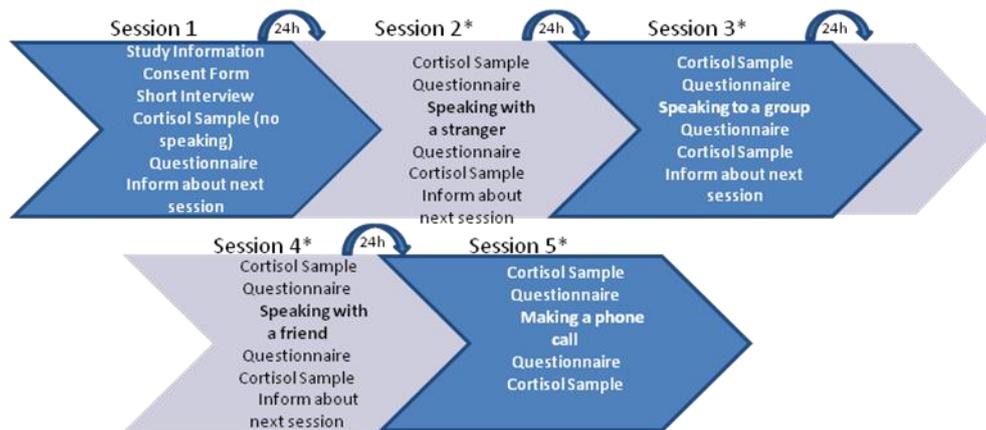
All stutterers were happy to be part of her research and eagerly await their own personal results, and the overall results with much interest.



JANINE DIEHL, from Germany  
Master of Speech Language therapy student, University of Canterbury



## The relationship between salivary cortisol levels and self perception of speaking environment in adults who stutter



\* note sessions 2-5 will be completed in randomised order

Participant Recruitment

June - July 2010

## NATIONAL STUTTERING ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

### Cleveland, Ohio, 2010, USA

By Lisette Wesseling... Person who stutters

The National Stuttering Association, a self-help group based in the USA, held its annual conference in Cleveland, Ohio from 7 to 11 July. I have just returned home from it, and wanted to share a few thoughts and impressions.

There were a large variety of keynote speakers and workshops available. Speakers ranged from Mr Sander Flaum, CEO of healthcare consultancy Flaum Partners, whose message boiled down to "if you work hard at your fluency technique, you will be fluent." Mr Flaum certainly demonstrated incredible control and fluency using the method taught at the Hollins Communication Research Institute – something which sounded not dissimilar to Smooth Speech. Contrasted with this were keynote speakers who used no fluency controls and who just chose to stutter openly. Their maxim: you can be a good communicator whether you stutter or not. My heart warmed to the 12-year-old girl who spoke

as one of these keynote speakers. I would not have had the courage to speak in front of a large ballroom full of people at that age, because my stutter was limiting my self-expression so much then. We also heard from Dr Denins Drayna on preliminary studies in genetics and stuttering. Dr Gerald Maguire gave a workshop updating on the progress of the drug Pagoclone, which appears not to be as statistically effective in treating stuttering as many had hoped.

The workshops included everything from "Advertise Your Stuttering," "Covert Stuttering – Exposed," "Mixing and Mingling," re-living and re-framing your first memory of stuttering, to open microphone sessions where people could just tell their stories.

Attendees numbered 603, and included adults and children who stutter, their parents and spouses, and a large number of speech therapists who came to learn about stuttering from the inside. Several workshops were held for speech therapists around treatment paradigms and clinical examples of treating more than just the audible stuttering in their clients. Professionals come to these conferences to really learn what their clients who stutter want from their therapy: perhaps fluency is not the only criterion for success in speech therapy? Everybody stutters or hides their stuttering differently, which means that treatment options need to reflect this diversity.

The children who stutter had a chance to play with others like them and find out they are not alone. Teenagers performed a hip-hop number at the final ceremony, and another performance was given by young people from Our Time Theatre Company in New York. This is an organisation run for kids who stutter that allows them to perform on stage, guided by professionals. If someone stutters, the musicians ad lib until the stutter is over and things proceed again. I found this very moving and a great example of how most people are willing to give us the time we need if we get stuck while talking. These kids are learning an important lesson at a very young age.

The thing that touched me most about the conference was the non-judgmental welcome everybody gets, whether they stutter or not and whether they choose to use speech controls or not. Those like me who habitually hide their stuttering feel free to let some of this stuttering out, which is such a relief! You can just stutter, and people still listen to you with kindness and genuine interest. The "Mixing and Mingling" workshop was a very striking example of this. One-hundred-and-twenty people who stutter talked with each other, speed-dating style, and the thing which was important was who they were and what they said, not whether they maintained good control or reached their speech targets. You can say a lot in five minutes if you want to.

However we choose to approach our own stutter, the fact remains that we all have suffered or continue to suffer underneath the surface. The support model offered by the NSA helps me see stuttering as an opportunity for far more than simply fixing a broken speech mechanism. It is about personal growth, dealing with the shame and the hiding, and learning that the world will listen to me even if I stutter. If you are interested in attending future conferences, or in the NSA, go to [www.westutter.com](http://www.westutter.com) or contact me at [lissetwesseling@gmail.com](mailto:lissetwesseling@gmail.com).

You can also get a real flavour of the conference at [www.stuttertalk.com](http://www.stuttertalk.com), which contains many podcasts related to stuttering, and a series of podcasts recorded at the conference.

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## McGUIRE PROGRAMME NZ

By Bruce Whitfield

The past few weeks have been fairly quiet for the McGuire Programme around the country. We did run a refresher day in Christchurch on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2010. Only Luke Hwang, our new graduate Candice Douglas & myself attended the morning session, with Jack Hoetjes & Rob Woolley joining us at Northlands Mall to have lunch & do some contacts. Jack stayed for the afternoon, but Rob had some study to do for his assignments. People got plenty of speaking time with just a small number in the group. During the morning we all spoke on the phone with a strong Australian instructor called Rob Lucas who lives in Adelaide.

The following Saturday Jason Alpine from Wellington flew down to Christchurch again & we spent the day doing contacts at the Northwood Shopping Centre & Northlands Mall. Jason's speech was really good & he was committed it to keeping it that way for his 2-week holiday to the USA in July.

Geoff Johnston the Regional Director in Australia has set up a group email discussion list for Australian graduates & has invited all NZ graduates to join it.

This can be done by sending an email to:  
[AussieGrads-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AussieGrads-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

There will be a 2-day refresher for McGuire graduates in LEVIN during the weekend of the 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> October 2010. It will be “live-in” at Adie Campbell’s home. Enquiries for further details can be sent to Bruce Whitfield at [brucepw@slingshot.co.nz](mailto:brucepw@slingshot.co.nz)

Luke Hwang has been organizing a McGuire support group in Auckland for the past few months. Numbers tend to fluctuate but attendees report that the meetings are very beneficial.

The Christchurch McGuire support group continues to meet at Bruce Whitfield’s home once a fortnight on a Monday evening at 7.15pm to 9pm. The most recent NZ graduate Candice Douglas is a welcome addition to the gathering. Candice, along with Rob Woolley took part in Janine Diehl’s research project. Rob has recently been elected as President of his Toastmasters Chapter. Sam Bedford travelled to Adelaide in mid-July to participate in his 3<sup>rd</sup> 4-day intensive McGuire course. The group welcomes back Jack Hoetjes from his many working weeks away from home as he comes to grips with his employer’s computer training scheme around the country.

The UK McGuire graduates have just released a list of people who would like early morning calls. Great for us NZer’s to use as new people to call during our evening.

Dave McGuire reports that there were 335 new graduates from intensive courses around the world in 2009. The most prolific regions being Ireland with 86, UK North with 68 & our cousins in Australia with 62.

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## CANTERBURY SPEAK EASY BOOSTER 3 JULY 2010

Nina Clark-Whitfield

A few keen members from the Canterbury Speak Easy group met on 3 July for another booster day with Dean Sutherland, a Speech and Language Therapist from the Department of Communication Disorders, at the University of Canterbury. Our venue was the Health Science Building at the University

of Canterbury's College of Education campus. Our aim for the day was to work on our speech technique.

We began with a relaxation tape by Derek Roger. This was followed by a review of our technique by listening to Mark Onslow's Camperdown Speech Exemplar 2004, speaking at a naturalness of nine, on an internet video clip. It was then our task, to copy as closely as possible, Mark Onslow's rendition of a naturalness of nine. After this was accomplished, we practised our technique at faster and slower speeds, before Dean videoed us in order to determine, how we sounded and appeared to anyone observing us.

At lunchtime, we set out for the Riccarton House Market with the intention of doing contacts with the stall-holders. Alas, however, by the time we reached Riccarton House most of the stalls had been packed up for the day. Although disappointed, we were able to have a couple of conversations with those stall-holders who were still there, before returning to the College grounds to eat lunch.

In the afternoon, Dean set us challenging activities to test how strong our technique was in these designated situations. Everyone performed well, either making phone calls or doing role plays. As always, everyone felt their speech technique was strengthened by the work done on our booster day. We finished the day by goal setting.

We thank Dean Sutherland for making himself available for our booster days which are invaluable for maintaining good fluency.

# INTENSIVE FLUENCY COURSE

DEPT OF COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

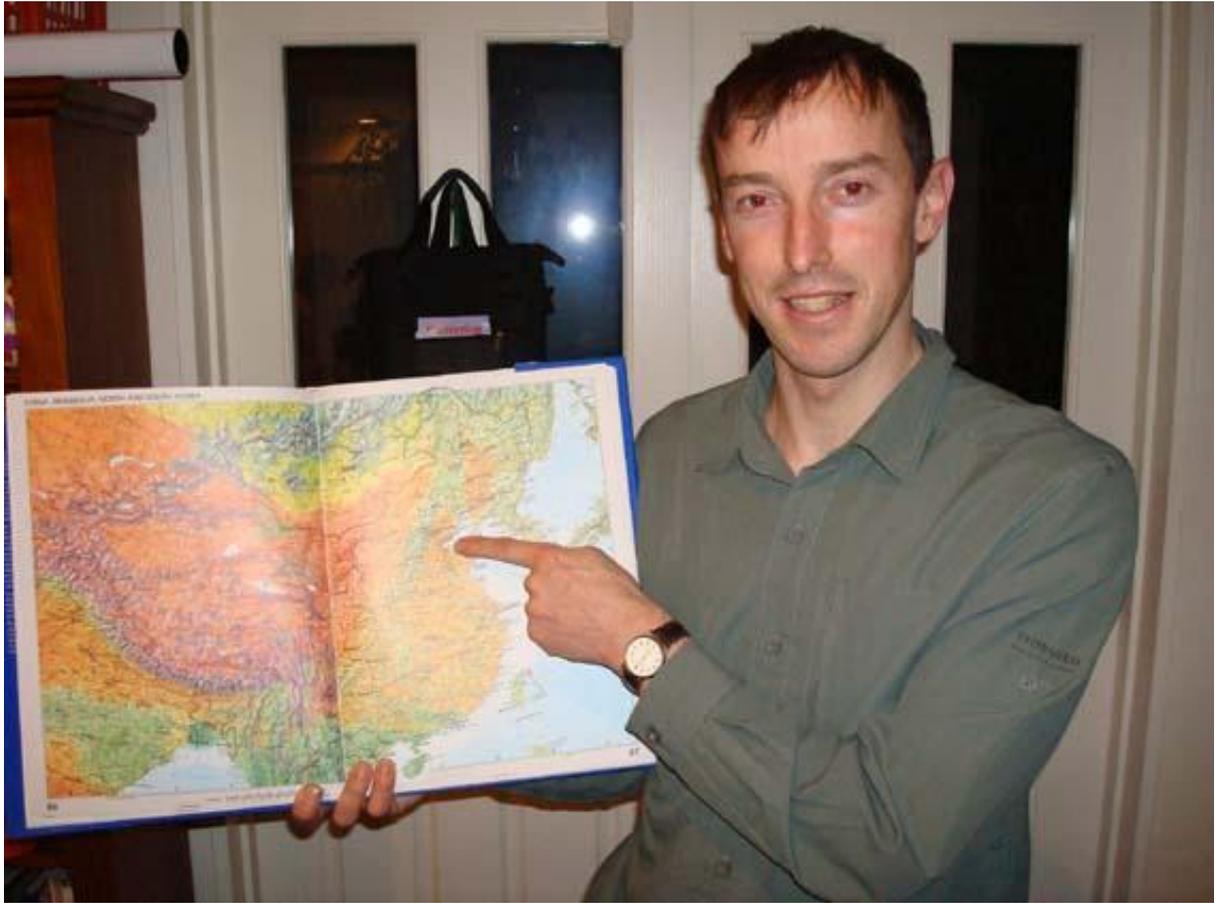
By participant Katherine Best

I thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the Camperdown Intensive at the end of July 2010. It came with a mixture of challenges and achievements. One of the best parts was meeting new people, both stutterers and non-stutterers. I was able to relate to the other stutterers and talk about some of the situations that we struggle with in everyday life.

For me, one of the highlights was completing tasks with confidence and fluency, which in the past were a frustration and brought on a lot of anxiety. Such tasks included answering the telephone at work with other people around me. It is such a great feeling when you achieve it!

I learned a lot about my stutter over the time of the course and about some of the coping mechanisms that I use in order to 'get a word out'. I now have learnt how to manage my stutter, and have noticed a reduction in my anxiety about certain situations since the course. I look forward to using the technique in my daily life and in situations that previously I would have avoided. Watch out world!

Thank you to Tika, Mike, Janine, Monica and the speech therapy students involved in the course for your encouragement, patience and companionship.



**STEPHEN HOARE-VANCE, CANTERBURY BRANCH**  
(2010 President's Cup recipient... for Outstanding Achievement)  
Pointing to TANGSHAN, CHINA where he will be taking up a position at the  
University to teach English.

# News from START

Rachel Dobbin, Roz Young and Janelle Forman  
Speech Language Therapists at START

In July, START (Stuttering Treatment and Research Trust) in Auckland ran another 5-day course for adults. This was run by Roz Young and Rachel Dobbin (SLTs) supported by Speech Language Therapy students from Massey University. For the first time in START's history, the male participants were outnumbered!!! We had 4 female participants, 6 female SLT students, Roz and Rachel - - - and two very brave male participants!!!! (some might say 'lucky'?!)

The course was a great experience for all. The participants made significant gains in fluency and communication attitudes. It was our pleasure to have George Patterson speak to the group about SpeakEasy and its vital role as a self help group. Ian Grant also made a motivating guest appearance, sharing stories and experiences with his usual sense of humour and wisdom.

So what is next? Well, we are hoping to run another Intensive Course in November if there is sufficient demand. We have held one Speech Technique Practice session with Auckland SpeakEasy, and have a Booster course planned for anyone wanting a refresher session in September!

We are also already thinking about International Stuttering Awareness Day, which seems to come around faster each year – October 22<sup>nd</sup>! We feel this is a great opportunity to raise awareness about stuttering. Hopefully we can help more people learn about stuttering and where to go for help.

We are always looking for suggestions or comments from SpeakEasy members – so please get in touch if you have any thoughts about how we can continue to work together! Email [support@start.org.nz](mailto:support@start.org.nz)



## Pauline Lorenzen, Canterbury Branch

Pauline Lorenzen is a regular attendee at Canterbury Branch support group meetings & other Speak Easy events. By the time you read this Pauline will have returned from her overseas trip to visit her daughter & family who are temporarily living & working in England. A ride through the Channel Tunnel to Normandy, France is included in her itinerary. Pauline will be away from the 31<sup>st</sup> July to 6<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

Pauline has shown a great improvement in her speech, & has presented very well in recent oratory competitions. It is quite possible that she could be one of the Canterbury representatives in next year's national oratory competition in Christchurch, & a force to be reckoned with.

Have a pleasant & safe holiday Pauline. Please tell us all about it when you return to New Zealand.

# CANTERBURY BRANCH REPORT

## Barry Hay, Branch President

It is good to have the winter behind us, to see the blossom on the trees and to look forward to the spring and summer weather. It is hard to go out on a cold winter's evening, but we have had the regular members turning up to the meetings.

Most of us volunteered to help with research at the Canterbury University & became involved in a study by Professor Mike Robb and Janine Diehl a speech therapist from Germany. They took a swab sample from our mouths for a base line measurement and then got us to speak in different social situations which were:

- To a small group of strangers
- To a stranger on the phone
- To a friend face to face
- To a stranger face to face

The study was to see the relationship between salivary cortisol levels and self perception of speaking environments in adults who stutter.

Janine is having a short holiday back in Germany catching up with family and friends and when she gets back we will get the results.

We have recently had five sessions with two speech therapy students at the University. This was co-ordinated by Janine and again was beneficial to both groups and it gives the students some experience with stutterers in a clinical situation.

Other students were also involved in the 3-day intensive fluency course which was held at the end of July. Three of the course attendees came to a session with the students and will hopefully be keen enough to attend more Speak Easy meetings.

Planning for the 2011 National AGM/Conference is progressing well.

We are planning to have a stall in Westfield Mall again for World Stuttering Awareness Day. Stephen Hoare-Vance has gone over to China to teach English and we hope everything goes well.



The familiar faces of CANTERBURY BRANCH Speak Easy members in July 2010, attending the first of 5 support group meetings with 2 speech therapy students in the Dept of Communication Disorders at the University of Canterbury. The students are Rachel seated left, & Kathryn standing right. Janine Diehl facilitated the evening & took the photograph.

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Bruce Whitfield

The past 3 months have been relatively quiet on the administrative side of things. The National Committee met in a Skype conference call on Wednesday evening 25<sup>th</sup> August 2010 for about an hour. James Fox was unable to join us so George Patterson took the minutes.

I submitted 4 recent Speak Easy photographs to Michael Sugarman at the ISA in response to his request for pictures for a slide show to be displayed in conjunction with International Stuttering Awareness Day.

A 3-day fluency course run by the Dept of Communication Disorders at the University of Canterbury in July resulted in 3 of the 5 participants making some contact with the Canterbury support group. Let us hope that new members are encouraged to join our meagre numbers.

The five Thursday evening Speak Easy group meetings in Christchurch, with 2 speech therapy students in July & August, were very enjoyable & inspiring. The group was led by Masters Student Janine Diehl, who all agree is a real treasure, & it is a pleasure to be in her company. Using Janine's goal-setting & anxiety/fluency rating sheets was a very stimulating experience for me & I certainly recommend the use of them to other people who stutter.

It is the turn of the Canterbury Branch to host the NZSEA National AGM/Conference 2011. The dates are Friday 27<sup>th</sup> & Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> May. Tentative plans are already underway. The venue decided on is the Coppertop Room at the University of Canterbury & the accommodation will be at the Academy Motels in Creyke Road – the same as in 2007. If you have any suggestions about the programme or speakers etc, please email them to me in the next month or so.

Kyu-Won (AKA Luke) Hwang, previously a member of the Canterbury Branch, but now residing & working in Auckland, has told me he has booked himself a place on the next Melbourne McGuire Programme 4-day intensive course which gets underway on the evening of 29<sup>th</sup> September 2010. He is already a strong graduate & will be sure to demonstrate good technique & provide much encouragement to the new students.

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**About the presenter:** Alan Badmington is a former police officer and lifelong stutterer from Wales, UK. He is a highly successful figure in the public speaking clubs of England and Wales, having won numerous trophies. Earlier this year, he was one of the eight finalists in the Association of Speakers Clubs UK national public speaking championships. He regularly addresses diverse community organisations in an attempt to increase public awareness about stuttering. Alan has also given talks to SLP student graduates in the USA, as well as undertaking presentations/workshops at NSA/BSA events and on mainland Europe. He was a keynote speaker at the 7th World Congress for People Who Stutter in Australia in February 2004, where he won the Oratory Competition. His television, radio and newspaper interviews have further brought stuttering to the fore. Alan has contributed a chapter to John Harrison's book, 'How to conquer your fears of speaking before people'. His work has been frequently reproduced in NSA/BSA publications and on the major stuttering-related websites. Alan was formerly joint owner of Stutteringchat, the world's largest Internet group for persons who stutter. Email: alan@highfieldstile.fsnet.co.uk

## **How I Changed My Stuttering Mindset**

**By Alan Badmington  
from Wales**

I understand that I commenced stuttering at about the age of 3. I received early therapy and cannot recall any major difficulties until I entered the grammar school at 11 years.

I have vivid memories of struggling to give my name and address at the initial registration, in the presence of teachers and pupils that I had not previously encountered.

Reading aloud in class was a nightmare. I would calculate (10 desks ahead) what I would be required to say. Struck by the stark reality that my passage contained many words that had previously given me difficulty, I would remain silent and the reading would pass to the next pupil. That was one of the first examples that I recall of approach avoidance.

Further therapy followed without much success. I could read successfully in the therapy room, but would neither ask, nor respond to, questions in class for fear of appearing foolish.

As I progressed through school, the situation worsened and I came to accept that I could never speak in front of a group. I felt that I would always have difficulty expressing myself to people I did not know well.

Words commencing with specific letters attracted a particular emotional charge, as I repeatedly stumbled whilst attempting to say them. I developed the ability to provide instant synonyms, not commencing with the 'dreaded' letters. I became a 'walking Thesaurus' - further adding to the web of avoidances that had become an integral part of my existence.

During my life, as I suffered the consequences of malfunctioning speech, I changed the way I felt about myself, and others. I developed strategies to protect myself from shame and embarrassment. Fear assumed the role of guardian, shielding me from experiencing the negative emotions that I felt when I stuttered. When these changes began to influence and reinforce each other, the problem became self-perpetuating.

**SELF-LIMITING BELIEFS** My beliefs about my speech (and other areas of my life) came about in a number of different ways. Primarily, they were created by my experiences, and the way in which I interpreted those events. Here are some of the self-limiting beliefs that I accumulated as a result of past difficulties:

1. I could not speak freely in front of groups, or persons with whom I was not familiar.
2. I could not use words commencing with the letters 'b', 'c', 'd', 'f', 'g', 'j', 'k', 'm', 'n', 'p', 's', 't' and 'v'. Half of the alphabet lay outside my scope.
3. I could never give detailed explanations. My oral participation would comprise a few carefully selected, hastily delivered, words and I would then withdraw from the conversation.
4. I could never speak while I was the centre of attention. To combat this, I would discourteously interrupt while others were talking, so that the focus was never upon me when I commenced speaking.
5. I would never become an effective speaker.
6. I needed to avoid pausing at all costs. If a hiatus occurred, I felt that I would have difficulty re-starting.
7. It was unacceptable for me to speak loudly and assertively in front of others.
8. That some people felt uneasy with the manner in which I spoke (The seeds of this belief were sown when a supervisor wrote the following comments after I had struggled to give evidence as a 19 year old police recruit. He reported, "When this officer gives evidence in court he is an embarrassment").

9. Based on previous lack of success, I believed that I would never be able to deal with my stuttering problem

## **SELF-IMAGE**

We all possess a mental blue-print of ourselves - a personal conception of who we are, shaped by our personal beliefs and life experiences. It will be influenced by what we consider to be our failures and successes, and the way in which others have reacted towards us. Our thoughts, feelings, behaviours and actions are consistent with that blue-print, irrespective of the reality of that image.

As a person who stuttered, I felt that I had to please other people. I constantly modified myself until I presented an image that I felt complied with their criteria.

A self-image that is too constrictive to accommodate our entire personality forces us to curtail our activities, so that we may continue to act out of character. As a result, I lost contact with my real self.

## **COMFORT ZONES**

It has been my experience that many persons who stutter avoid expanding their comfort zones, casting themselves in a diminished role - content to live safe, predictable existences. They choose to remain within that tried and tested environment, where there is an absence of risk and change. Fear is the gate-keeper to our comfort zones. Stepping outside into unfamiliar territory is invariably accompanied by nervousness and apprehension. By not venturing outside our comfort zones, we eliminate risk but severely limit our personal and professional growth.

Although I had led a relatively expansive life, and was proud of what I had achieved (in spite of my stutter), I felt that there were occasions where I had allowed the fear of stuttering to deter me from attempting certain things.

## **SPRINGBOARD FOR CHANGE**

In 2000, I acquired new tools to overcome speech blocks and 'feared' words. The resultant fluency that I experienced in a controlled environment provided the springboard for change. However, I realised that if I wished to sustain those gains in the outside world, I needed to address other areas of my life.

I also acquired a better understanding of the physiology and psychology of stuttering, and gained access to a support network.

At the same time, I also learned (via John Harrison's stuttering hexagon concept) that stuttering is not solely related to the mechanics of speech. It involves so much more: it is an interactive system involving the entire person, incorporating such factors as beliefs, perceptions, emotions, intentions, physical behaviours and physiological responses. (Harrison, 2004)

I knew that I had to deal with personal issues involving communication with others, while also recognising the need to dismantle the psychological framework that had supported my stutter for more than half a century. I was well aware that it would involve considerable effort. It is only in the dictionary that 'success' precedes 'work'.

## **CHANGING MY BELIEFS**

Beliefs are probably the most powerful force for creating positive changes. They have a direct influence upon the way we think and behave. We perform at a level that is consistent with our beliefs and not with our potential.

I realised that my self-limiting beliefs (about my speech and other areas of my life), were contributing to self-defeating behaviour. With this understanding, I set about identifying those beliefs that I felt were holding me back.

One way to change a belief is to challenge it. So that was the path I decided to explore. Having highlighted my negative beliefs, I prepared a plan of action in which I would place myself in challenging situations. I needed to do things that I believed I could not do. (Badmington, 2003)

I recognised avoidance as a crucial ingredient of my stuttering behaviour, and made a pact with myself that I would never again substitute an easy word for a difficult one. I also vowed that I would accept, and never shirk, the challenge of any speaking situation.

Speaking in front of groups also figured prominently amongst my list of fears. A catalogue of painful experiences had fuelled my belief that I could never successfully perform that role. I addressed the situation by joining three clubs under the umbrella of the Association of Speakers Clubs (in the UK). I quickly discovered that the fear of public speaking was shared by many other (fluent) club members.

I had frequent opportunities to speak before an audience and gained in confidence. I also overcame my reluctance to pause, maintain eye contact and speak assertively (also previous self-limiting beliefs).

During the past four years, I have addressed numerous organisations in the UK, and also undertaken speaking engagements, and facilitated workshops, in many parts of the world. My fear gradually evaporated and, today, I readily accept public speaking as an integral part of my new self-image.

Having participated in debating groups, drama classes, media interviews and an assortment of workshops that involved considerable interaction, I now find that giving detailed explanations is no longer a problem. Another negative belief has been discounted.

## **NEGATIVE THINKING**

The sub-conscious mind accepts every conscious thought as though it were true. It cannot differentiate between fact and fiction. It simply receives and stores the information without question.

Negative self-talk can be so damaging. I spent a lifetime reminding myself of (and giving far too much prominence to) those instances where I felt I had been unsuccessful. Today, once a negative thought appears, I acknowledge it and immediately dispense it to the trash can. I then replace it with a positive thought of my own choice.

I also found it useful to maintain a register of positive happenings which served to reinforce my progress. When I experienced setbacks, I viewed them as stepping stones to success, and not as failures.

Negative thinking can also activate the body's 'Fight and Flight' response, which can lead to stress.

## **VISUALIZATION**

In order to bring something into physical reality, it must first be created mentally. By using such techniques, I was able to generate images of success that allowed me to build up a pattern of positive behaviour in my subconscious mind.

In addition to visualization, I utilised affirmations - positive statements about myself. This further fed my subconscious with positive messages.

## **EXPERIENCING THE CHANGE**

While serving as a police officer, the severity of my stutter made it necessary for me to wear a small electronic device, known as the Edinburgh Masker. It emitted a buzzing noise every time I spoke, blocking out the sound of my own

voice. I wore it daily for 20 years, not hearing myself speak whilst it was activated. Although the equipment never eliminated my stuttering, it gave me the confidence to venture into situations that I might otherwise have avoided. Consequently, I expanded my comfort zones and developed my inter-personal skills.

Despite considerable setbacks, I built up a system that would eventually support greater self-expression later in life. When I acquired the new breathing/speaking techniques in 2000, they proved to be the final pieces in the jigsaw.

In the early days of the transformation, I experienced some unusual happenings. While enjoying greater freedom of speech, I would suddenly be hit by the realisation that I was not stuttering. A little voice would then chirp, "Hey Alan, why aren't you having any problems? This feels strange".

Once this occurred, I would invariably encounter my former feeling of holding back. Eventually, I became totally accustomed to the more liberated manner of speaking, and, today, I accept it without reservation. It is as natural as walking.

If I had not challenged and reversed my self-limiting beliefs (not just in relation to stuttering), and widened my narrow self-image, then my thoughts and actions would have continued to be generated in accordance with those beliefs, and my personal blue-print. As long as we retain a self-limiting belief, our resultant negative thoughts and behaviours will continue to influence our lives and speech.

But the changes did not happen overnight. I had to do certain things over and over until the behaviours were familiar, and I became used to seeing myself in the new roles. It was only then that they became an acceptable part of the 'real' me.

The moment I was prepared to give up my old self image, I found that there were incredible opportunities for change. I adopted a holistic approach and worked on various aspects of my life.

My speech improved as a by-product.

Once I had decided to take the initial step, I didn't require any motivation. You see, I was doing things that I had always dreamed of - I was saying the things that I had always wanted to say.

When we achieve something that we have always considered impossible, it causes us to reconsider our self-beliefs. If we conquer something that has

challenged our advancement, we grow in stature. When we overcome hurdles, it opens our eyes to possibilities that we could never have imagined.

That's exactly what happened. My self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy all grew immensely as I discovered my true potential. I thrived on the new experiences and responsibilities.

## **NO LONGER AN ISSUE**

During the past few years, I have shown myself differently to the world, and I love the way in which it is reacting differently to me.

Stuttering has now disappeared from my mind, in the sense that I cease to think about the physical act, or my personal attachment to such behaviour. Do I still block? Minor dysfluencies occur very infrequently (principally in casual conversation), but they do not involve blocking. Most of the time, they don't even register with me. Those of which I become aware, I choose to totally disregard. Fluent speakers don't take account of them, why should I? Perfectionism no longer oversees my speech.

Talking is now a thoroughly enjoyable experience. I make no apologies for indulging in it at every opportunity - I'm simply making up for lost time. I am driven by my intentions and not my expectations. I simply LET GO and have FUN!

Today, I do not have any anticipatory fear about saying any specific word, letter or sound. When I approach, or enter into, any speaking situation the implications of stuttering no longer permeate my thoughts. They are simply non-existent. The debilitating oral shackles that had inhibited me since childhood have finally been removed, and I can now pluck whatever words I wish, from the extremities of my expansive vocabulary (swelled by years of substitution), and say them without fear.

Since changing my stuttering mindset, and eliminating the components that once contributed to my blocking behaviour, I have discovered that it is no longer necessary to constantly focus upon my speech or any technique.

Stuttering is no longer an issue in my life.



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The editorial deadline for the next edition of AIR FLOW is: 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010

A sincere thank you to those people who submitted a contribution to this edition.

Bruce Whitfield, Editor.

Recent back issues of AIR FLOW can be viewed on the New Zealand Speak Easy Assn website at: <http://sites.google.com/site/nzspeakeasyassn/>

Some other websites relating to stuttering are:

[www.stutterisa.org/](http://www.stutterisa.org/)

<http://www.mcguireprogramme.com/>

<http://www.stutteringinnovations.com/>

<http://www.mnsu.edu/comdis/kuster/stutter.html> (the stuttering home page)

<http://www.stuttering.co.nz/>

<http://www.speecheasy.com/>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stuttering>

<http://www.cmds.canterbury.ac.nz/>

<http://www.casafuturetech.com/>

<http://www.stutteringhelp.org/>

<http://www.stutteringdissolution.com/>