

## Forum to be held to showcase practical skills to engage children with autism spectrum disorders

by [T. Avineshwaran](#)



A toddler fiddling with a smart phone.

CHILDRED should not look at smart phone screens until they are two due to the lasting negative effects on their language development and reading skills, says an expert.

Hospital Raja Permaisuri Bainun Paediatric Department Head Datuk Dr Amar Singh said infants may stare at the bright colors and motion on a screen, but their brains are incapable of making sense or meaning out those images.

“What infants and toddlers need most to learn is interaction with the people around them.

“They need to touch things, shake them, throw them, and most of all to see the faces and hear the voices of people,” he said to reporters during a press conference at the Royal Ipoh Club in Jalan Panglima Bukit Gantang Wahab here.

Dr Amar will be one of the speakers in the Rotary Inclusion and Autism Public Forum “Helping My Child – Parental Skills on Therapeutic Options for Children with Autism”.

Five Rotary Clubs in Ipoh – Rotary Club of Ipoh South (KRIS), Rotary Club of Greentown, Rotary Club of Ipoh, Rotary Club of Metro Ipoh and Rotary Club of Kinta – are set to collaborate with the Paediatric Department of HRPB for the forum, which is slated for Jan 14 next year, from 8am to 5pm at Auditorium Ambulatory Care Centre (ACC) Building, HRPB in Ipoh.

Dr Amar said a survey done by HRPB found that 400 two-year-olds in the state look at a television or smart phone screen for six hours and 18% of the 400 use smart phones and televisions.

He said from the age of two to five, children should only be allowed to watch television for two hours or less.

“Children are programmed to learn from interacting with other people and parents have to understand that. Interact with them.

“Some of us are busy these days that we’ve lost touch with reality. Children can be affected by cultural and social changes,” he said.

Studies have shown that the number of children diagnosed with autism or related disorders has grown at an alarming rate.

According to Dr Amar, in the 1970s and 1980s, about four out of every 10,000 children had autism but today, it’s estimated that one in every 100 children in developed and developing countries has an autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

The forum’s objective is to engage, communicate, educate and equip the public, especially parents, with knowledge and skills on therapeutic options for autistic children.

The one-day forum will showcase practical skills training, ideas for engaging children with ASD and support for families with such children.

National Early Childhood Intervention Council (ECIC) President Dr Wong Woan Ying said the forum is designed to empower parents, care-givers and teachers by providing them with tools to engage and manage children with autism.

“Parents should know that a child should speak at least six words after 18 months. If they can’t, there is a high chance that they have autism and parents should know that.

“If parents are worried it’s best for them to see a specialist and diagnose and also learn how to deal with autism.

“Autistic children have high IQs and they are creative minded. The world has seen many brilliant people with autism and one of them is Bill Gates. Look at him now, he still has the symptoms but he is pushing business to a whole new level.”

Dr Amar encourages the public to attend the forum and he says he expects more than 200 people to attend.

Source:

<http://www.thestar.com.my/metro/community/2016/12/13/forum-to-be-held-to-showcase-practical-skills-to-engage-children-with-autism-spectrum-disorders/>