Invited Talk:

Public Attitudes Toward Stuttering: International Findings and Emerging Research Challenges

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Abstract:

Children and adults who stutter experience misunderstanding, bias, stigma, and discrimination from the general public. Using a standard measure of public attitudes, the Public Opinion Survey of Human Attributes—Stuttering (POSHA–S), as well as a new POSHA–S/Child version and a clinical version, recent and ongoing research has documented such negative aspects of public attitudes toward stuttering all around the world. This presentation (a) summarizes comparisons among widely divergent populations geographically, culturally, and professionally; (b) highlights variables that have been associated with better or worse public attitudes toward stuttering and those that make little difference; and summarizes research on recent efforts to improve public attitudes in children and adults. The presentation identifies tentative conclusions supported by replications in several investigations and ends with proposals for future research and advocacy initiatives that hold promise for improving the quality of life of those who stutter.

Biography:

Ken St. Louis, a mostly recovered stutterer, is a professor of speech-language pathology in the Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders at West Virginia University (WVU). St. Louis has taught and treated fluency disorders for 40 years. His research has culminated in 155 publications and 350 presentations. He was a cofounder of the International Fluency Association (IFA) and the International Cluttering Association (ICA). His awards include ASHA Fellowship, the Deso Weiss Award for Excellence in cluttering, WVU’s Benedum Distinguished Scholar Award, WVU’s Heebink Award for Outstanding Service to the State of West Virginia, and IFA’s Lifetime Achievement Award. In 1999, he founded the International Project of Attitudes Toward Human Attributes and has collaborated with numerous colleagues internationally on measuring public attitudes toward stuttering. Other current research interests include the definition and symptoms of cluttering and stories of stuttering.