Today’s piece was prepared by Benjamin al-Haddad, MD and is based on an article from The Economist, In the beginning was the word <http://www.economist.com/news/science-and-technology/21596923-how-babbling-babies-can-boost-their-brains-beginning-was-word>

This article outlines research on speaking to infants and later academic success. Earlier work had shown that there is a positive correlation between how much parents speak with their children and how well they perform at school and formed the basis of The 30-Million-Word-Gap. This effect does not exist for passive listening as one might do with television viewing or radio or from being present while adults talk to each other. It was understood that by the age of three, there was substantial development in these arenas and therefore also possibility of delay. However, new work (at the time of the article's publication) suggests that by the age of 18 months, there are differences between toddlers who are engaged with a lot of spoken language and those who are not.

The context of the article is on the most appropriate age at which to send children to preschool. Four years, it contends, based on the research, may be too late. The article does not consider whether these associations are causal nor does it reflect on the difficulty of establishing causality in these types of studies. In this sense, the article is incomplete. However, in the absence of clear evidence, it seems like speaking with children more- rather than less- would seem to be a beneficial and positive activity for parents to undertake.

**RESOURCES:**

Description of the 30-million-word-gap research *Rice University*

<http://literacy.rice.edu/thirty-million-word-gap>

Brief interview with the researcher (Todd Risley)

<http://www.childrenofthecode.org/Tour/c3b/differences.htm> *Children of the Code*

Thirty Million Words Initiative <http://thirtymillionwords.org/> *Program of the University of Chicago to help promote parent-directed programs to encourage parents to build engaged communication with their children*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!