Today’s piece was prepared by Kimberly Grelli, MD, based on a New York Times story Traditional Toys May Beat Gadgets in Language Development

<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/12/23/traditional-toys-may-beat-gadgets-in-language-development/?mwrsm=Email&_r=0>

Walking through a toy store, there is growing pressure from parents to buy electronic toys that claim to advance childhood language development. This article summarizes a recently published article in *JAMA Pediatrics* that examined the relationship between electronic toys compared to traditional toys in language development. The study found that twenty-six 10-16-month-old children said comparably fewer words using an electronic toy advertised to promote language development when compared to traditional toys. The journalist remarks that the study hypothesized that parental interaction was substituted by interaction with the electronic toy. Parents spoke on average 40 words per minute with electronic toys, 56 words per minute with traditional toys, and 67 words per minute with books. Children were also found to produce fewer words using electronic toys compared to playing with traditional toys or using books. Both word number and quality were significantly less with the electronic toys for both parents and children.

The Times appropriately cautions that the sample size was small and involved mainly upper middle class participants, although does not adequately emphasize the relevance of these research design limitations. Nevertheless, the findings support concerns regarding increasing screen time and encroachment on parent-child interaction, and language and social development, and the message is similar to last week’s In The News piece by Ariana Witkin addressing e-reading to toddlers. The authors of the referenced *JAMA Pediatrics* article conclude that the use of electronic toys should be minimized. Resources below may be useful to families and primary care providers:

**RESOURCES ON MEDIA EXPOSURE AND BEHAVIOR & DEVELOPMENT:**

* Media and Children <https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/pages/media-and-children.aspx>

*American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines*

* Center on Media and Child Health: <http://cmch.tv/>

*Boston Children’s Hospital academic research center whose mission is to educate and empower children and those who care for them to create and consume media in ways that optimize children’s health and development.*

* Primary Article: *JAMA Pediatr.*2016;170(2):132-137. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2015.3753

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