Today’s piece was prepared by Cat Delostrinos, MD and comes from HealthDay, entitled “Infants’ cries may predict later language development”. <http://consumer.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=653061>

A German study compared crying complexity of 2-month-old babies with 1) cleft lip and palate; 2) cleft lip only; and 3) babies with neither. Complexity was related to the number of arcs in the melody of a baby’s recorded cry. The article states that those with less complex cries were more likely to develop language delay. The article also points out that there was a significant difference in the cries in those with cleft lip and palate and cleft lip only.

Patients with cleft lip and palate and cleft lip only are at risk for speech and/or language delay due to oropharyngeal anatomy and increased risk of middle ear disease leading to hearing impairment. Children benefit if identified early, are followed in multi-disciplinary Craniofacial clinics and begin speech therapy early in life. Unfortunately, the article fails to identify the purpose of the research: to see if there is also a neuropsychological basis for the language delay in these patients which could be identified early in their lives because complex crying does not depend on palate anatomy, only the vocal chords.

Further reading of the study reveals drawbacks. Unilateral and bilateral clefts were grouped together, yet cleft severity could reflect a significant difference in brain development thereby leading to a difference in language delay. Also, the authors acknowledge that babbling as a form of communication, which was not measured in this study, may affect the duration and perhaps even complexity of crying.

Useful information about cleft lip and palate, as well as early language development, may supplement the HealthDay article. The following sites are helpful:

**RESOURCES FOR PARENTS ON EARLY LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT & CLEFT LIP/PALATE:**  
Healthy Children: Ages and Stages *AAP on Language development* <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/pages/Hearing-and-Making-Sounds.aspx?nfstatus=401&nftoken=00000000-0000-0000-0000-000000000000&nfstatusdescription=ERROR%3a+No+local+token>

Cleft Palate Foundation *American Cleft Palate – Craniofacial Association*<http://www.cleftline.org/>

**Reference:**Wermke K et al: Cry melody in 2-month-old infants with and without clefts. Cleft Palate Craniofacial Journal. 2011 May; 48(3):321-30.

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