Today’s piece was prepared by Amanda Stinger, MD based on a USA Today article Baby talk: Researchers say dads need to speak up. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/11/03/talking-baby-mom-dad/18262421/>

This article summarizes a recent study in *Pediatrics* examining adult-infant communication at 3 time-points in the first 7 months of life, a project that was inspired by an oft-cited 1995 research study that showed children in affluent households hear 30 million more words by age 3 than their peers in poor households, with a positive correlation between number of words heard and later academic performance. In the current study, the journalist describes the procedure whereby after strapping microphones on infants and instructing parents to turn them on only when both parents were present, data analysis found that babies heard three times as many words from mothers as fathers. Dads rarely talked to infants unless the mom was part of the conversation as well. The data came from computer technology examining 33 families recorded on three separate occasions: just after birth, a few weeks later and at 7 months of age. The article also notes that about a quarter of infant vocalizations got a parental response, and that response was from the mother alone more than 70% of the time. The journalist concludes that fathers need additional encouragement to talk to their babies and improve the quantity and variety of early language exposure.

The article fairly describes the limitations of small sample size and the lack of generalizability, as only two-parent households were included, but while the author highlights the opportunity to empower dads to engage more with their infants, the reader may be misled to understand that failing to do so will necessarily jeopardize their children, which may place readers at risk for sentiments of guilt, shame, blame or other outcomes. No conclusion regarding outcomes can be drawn at this stage and a cautionary emphasis on this point is lacking in the USA story.

**RESOURCES ON LITERACY & LANGUAGE ENRICHMENT:**

The Thirty Million Words Initiative: <http://tmw.org/>

Zero to Three for early learning experiences: <http://www.zerotothree.org/>

On the Go, early language and literacy tools: <http://www.walearning.com/resources/on-the-go/>

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