

Voice and Hearing in the centre of new professorship



Prof. Dirk Mürbe was appointed to Saxony's only full professorship for diagnostics and therapy of diseases and disturbances of speech, voice, swallowing and pediatric hearing disorders. The field of phoniatrics and pedaudiology which is belonging to the clinic of Otorhinolaryngology at the University Hospital Dresden is further raised in importance in research and teaching, hence. The focus of Prof. Mürbe's work is the diagnostics, surgery and aftercare for patients with Cochlear Implants. As an expert for the human voice, the newly appointed professor cares for professional singers and runs the Studio for Voice Research at the Dresden University of Music Carl Maria von Weber. Prof. Mürbe is specialist for ENT-medicine, Phoniatrics and Pedaudiology. In parallel he finished a study in classical singing.

Phoniatrics and pedaudiology are concerned with most different forms of communication disorders. These are not only inherent or acquired diseases or problems with voice, speech and hearing. Also social and psychic deficits can cause disturbances which are diagnosed and treated at the University Hospital by Prof. Mürbe's team. Beside the specialists of ENT-medicine, phoniatrics and pedaudiology, there are speech and languagetherapists, ergotherapists and psychologists. Furthermore there are cooperations with neurologists, maxillofacial surgeons and pediatricians. There needs to be an interdisciplinary team to provide help learning speech anew after strokes and surgical head interventions to gain optimal treatment success. Same requirements apply for children born with a cleft palate lip. They too need a special care to learn speech well. A close cooperation of experts of different fields is everyday experience at the Saxon Cochlear Implant Center (SCIC) at the ENT-Clinic. The institution under management by Prof. Mürbe is responsible for diagnostics and aftercare of patients with Cochlear implants. Since nearly 15 years, SCIC cares for cochlear implant patients with high-grade hearing disorders. This inner ear prosthesis is not only implanted with children, born without hearing, but also with late-onset deafness and highly hard hearing people. A cochlear implant allows people to retrieve hearing and speech understanding or opens the world of speech and hearing for the first time. The SCIC moved into new rooms last year. "The modern place ensures not only the conditions for our patients, but also for research and teaching. The professorship for phoniatrics and pedaudiology contributes to intensify scientific work, says Prof. Albrecht, Medical Chairman of the Board of directors.

People increasingly suffer from overstrained voice

Communication disorders more often appear, declared Prof. Mürbe. That is not only referring to speech deficits of children of kindergarten age caused by high TV consumption but also problems of the grown-up voice. In more and more jobs, people need their voice to a major part. One hundred year ago only one fifths of all jobs were connected to a high strain of voice. Today it is two thirds. Jobs in callcenters are in the focus here: Even though call center agents don't speak in a loud voice, the continuous strain of the vocal cords may cause medical problems. In an early state, overstrain is often not recognized. The first sign often is a repeated clearing of throat. The mucosa coated larynx is secreting more under high strain. That requires a higher effort for speaking. The result is a permanent hoarseness which threatens professional work, says the voice expert. Reason for these problems of people who speak much, is a non optimal efficiency of speech. Early training can prohibit

those deficits. But there are only few prevention programmes for many professional groups. Most people can improve the efficiency of their voice by training to avoid overstrain.

Research studio explores problems of singing voice

Prof. Mürbe as the leader of the studio for Voice Research at the Dresden University of Music Carl Maria von Weber, is concerned with health problems of singers and other artists, who professionally use their voice and speech. The studio is a unique treasure of the institution referring to 50 years of voice research in Dresden. It is his aim to further replenish the collected data and audio files and hereby help professional singers even more. Prof. Muerbe was himself educated at this institution, but is to be seen on stage not so often anymore. As member of the society "Das Lied in Dresden" he helps to organize concerts to give young artists the chance to appear on stage. He himself is seen rather as a scientist. Prof. Mürbe talks about how the human voice can fill a whole concert hall during the Children's University in November. Therefore the professor stands on a stage which is the dream of every singer, the Semper opera.