## Professional Experiences of Psychosocial and Behavioural Difficulties in Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Emily Fagan<sup>1</sup>, Nerina Scarinci<sup>1</sup>, Monique Waite<sup>1</sup>, Teresa Y.C. Ching<sup>1</sup>

School of Health and Rehabilitation Science, The University of Queensland, St Lucia, QLD, Australia

# WCA World Congress of Audiology

### **Abstract**

- Challenging behaviour is 2-4 times more common in deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) children than in normally hearing children<sup>[1, 2]</sup>
- Challenging behaviour can negatively impact:
  - Peer relationships
  - Attention and adherence to therapy
  - Academic success<sup>[3]</sup>
  - Family wellbeing
  - Caregiver stress
  - Reduced caregiver sense of competence [4]

### **Objectifs**

To understand how hearing care professionals (HCPs) support and collaborate with families of DHH children who wear hearing devices to manage challenging behaviour.

### **Méthodes et Matériels**

Participant Characteristics	
Profession	N
Speech Pathologist	12
Audiologist	5
Teacher of the Deaf	2
Psychologist	1
Total	20
Avg. years of experience	15.3

- In-depth semi-structured interviews
- Analysis: Qualitative thematic analysis

#### **Inclusion criteria:**

- Work with children aged 2-5 years old
- Work with children fitted with cochlear implants or hearing aids

### Résultats

How do hearing care professionals support and collaborate with families to manage the behaviour of DHH children?



Theme (1) Empower families by building their skills and confidence

#### **Subthemes**

- Reassurance that challenging behaviour is normal "And for the majority of families, they just they just need that reassurance and some ideas"
- Address concerns with empathy
- Observe and reflect on behaviour during sessions "Oh, look, notice how he did that, like, is that something that happens at home?"
- Tailor discussions to families' abilities
- Culturally sensitive practice
- Establish consistent boundaries and routines
- Set realistic expectations



Theme (4) Provide collaborative care and support

Theme (2) Facilitate effective communication for

positive behaviour support

Facilitate communication in challenging situations

Scaffold understanding with visual and non-verbal

"We're often having to support parents to understand how to manage

behaviour, like typical behaviour of a toddler in a deaf-friendly way"

"We'll help the family put together a visual calendar...and show the

child visually what the routine is, rather than always having that

auditory load of the routine"

### **U** 6

### Subthemes

Troubleshoot for changes in hearing and device issues

Theme (3) Guide the Integration of

devices into family life

- Develop routines and set realistic goals
- How to manage device frustration and overstimulation

"And we would coach parents to that, when they do take it off to not make a big deal about it, don't react, don't give them a great response because even that negative response is still a response"

- Encourage the child to develop device autonomy
- The use of positive reinforcement and tools to support retention
- Support families to overcome persistent low usage

**Subthemes** 

communication

### Subthemes

Connect families for parent-to-parent support

Teach families to advocate for their child

- " and that parent (at playgroup) chimed in and said 'Oh yeah, and I've got older children too, and this is what I've tried' and like that parent then provided so much more valuable lived experience'
- Interprofessional collaboration and referral
- "I'm pretty confident where I can link (families) in. And I also work with a social worker and quite often, I'll have a conversation with her about you know, what do you think would be the best fit for this family"
- Utilise behaviour management programs when appropriate

### Conclusion

### **Key Findings:**

Findings suggest that HCPs have adopted a range of strategies to provide nuanced behavioural support to meet the unique needs of DHH children including:

- Individualised parent coaching
- Effective communication techniques for managing behaviour
- Strategies to encourage device usage
- Collaborating in an interdisciplinary model of care

### **Next Steps:**

There remains a *critical need* for:

- Targeted training and resources to help professionals address the complex behaviour management challenges in diverse cultural and family settings.
- Evidence-based guidelines to standardise approaches across different roles and ensure consistency in support.
- Further research to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of current strategies and explore how professionals can better support families in managing device usage and behaviour.

### References

- Bigler, D., et al., Assessment and Treatment of Behavioral Disorders in Children with Hearing Loss: A Systematic Review. Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, 2019. 160(1): p. 36-48.
- 2. Stevenson, J., et al., Emotional and behavioural difficulties in children and adolescents with hearing impairment: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Eur Child Adolesc Psychiatry, 2015. 24(5): p. 477-96.
- Stormont, M., Externalizing behavior problems in young children: Contributing factors and early intervention. Psychol. Schs, 2002. 39(2): p. 127-138.
- Webster-Stratton, C., Preventing conduct problems in Head Start children: Strengthening parenting competencies. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1998. 66(5): p. 715-730.

For further information or to contact the first author please scan the QR code









The University of Queensland, St Lucia, Brisbane, Australia







