

A Short Note on Phonetics and Audiology

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ABOUT THE STUDY

Audiology is a branch of science that studies hearing, balance, and related disorders. Audiologists treat those with hearing loss and proactively prevent related damage. By employing various testing systems (for example behavior hearing tests, otoacoustic emission measurements, and electrophysiologic tests), audiologists aim to determine whether someone has normal sensitivity to sounds. If hearing loss is identified, audiologists determine which portions of hearing (high, middle, or low frequencies) are affected, to what degree (severity of loss), and where the lesion causing the hearing loss is found (outer ear, middle ear, internal ear, auditory nerve and central nervous system). If an audiologist determines that a hearing loss or vestibular abnormality is present he or she will provide recommendations for interventions or rehabilitation (e.g. hearing aids, cochlear implants, appropriate medical referrals). Hearing aid is provided to patients to enhance their interaction by improving their listening and hearing.

Addressing mild and unilateral hearing loss: What do families want?

Many clinicians are hungry for evidence-based recommendations for the optimal care for children with mild and Unilateral Hearing Loss (UHL). A great place to start understands the needs of families of children with these conditions. Fitzpatrick, et al.¹ sought to identify the services that were most coveted by the families of children with mild and UHL, and found that families greatly preferred enhanced support for speech and language development. Specifically, families desired formal speech and language assessments to ensure that their children were making satisfactory progress. They also wanted direct speech and language

therapy to facilitate optimal development of language abilities. Families also expressed support for amplification use and consistent communication with professionals. Of note, however, families were twice as likely to want support for speech and language development as for amplification use.

Guidelines for serving children with UHL

Bagatto and colleagues developed an excellent summary of principles to be considered in the management of children with UHL. Following a 2017 conference on the assessment and management of children with UHL, an international panel of experts on the topic met to develop practice parameters and detailed guidelines to assist clinicians in providing individualized, best-practice services for children with hearing loss. The summary of these guidelines includes pros, cons, and clinical considerations for various hearing technologies available for children with UHL. The authors also provided a flowchart to help professionals determine a clinical care plan for these children.

Listening effort of children with hearing loss in complex situations

They studied listening effort by measuring Verbal Response Time (VRT) during speech-recognition-in-noise testing and the ability to monitor a visual stimulus during speech recognition-in-noise assessment (i.e., dual-task paradigm). Children with hearing loss showed longer VRT than children with normal hearing, which is yet more evidence of higher-order processing deficits in children with hearing loss. McGarrigle and colleagues found that these processing deficits may hamper a child's ability to succeed in the classroom. Interestingly, the use of amplification did not improve the response time of children with hearing loss.

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