

Too Soon to Talk? Speech-Language Pathologists Perspectives on Diagnosis Under Three

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Background

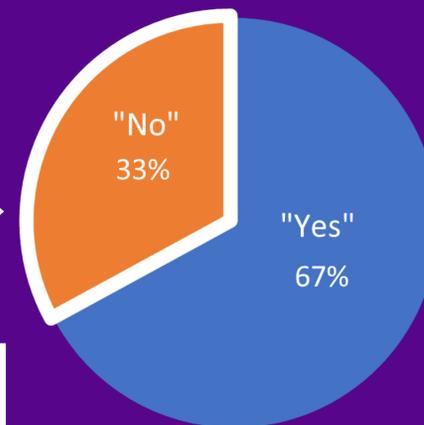
- Symptoms of CAS often emerge in infancy and toddlerhood (Overby et al., 2019; Overby et al., 2020)
- To avoid negative practice, treatment should start when motor plans are newly developing and most malleable (Guenther, 1994; Mass et al., 2008)
- CAS experts agree that diagnosis is dependent on skills and characteristics, not a particular age (Strand, 2015)
- However, due to the complex nature of diagnosis, there is a misperception CAS cannot be diagnosed in children under three

Research questions

1. What proportion of early intervention SLPs believe it is possible to diagnose CAS in children under three?
2. What is the relationship between an SLPs demographics and training and their perspectives on diagnosing CAS in children under three?
3. What assessment and treatment methods are being used for CAS in children under three?

Main finding: Clinical misperception around early diagnosis of CAS remains a big problem among speech language pathologists!

"In your clinical opinion, is it possible to diagnose childhood apraxia of speech in children under three years old?"



1/3 of early intervention SLPs still hold this outdated perspective!



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Survey Development

- Thorough review of relevant literature
- Multiple focus groups
- Survey pretesting (cognitive interviews; concurrent think-alouds) with ten ASHA-certified SLPs
- Consultation with statistician on face validity of survey

Survey Content

- Clinician demographics: e.g., years practicing, setting, clinical training
- Perspective on diagnosing CAS in children under three
- Knowledge on the evidence-base for assessing and treating CAS
- Evaluation and treatment approaches for children under three with CAS

Preliminary Results

- Data collection and analysis is ongoing!
- 79 validated participant responses so far
- Participants:
 - From 26/50 states, across regions
 - Experience: 1-40 years practicing (mean=12.3; sd=8.6)
 - Caseload under 3: ranging from 1-75 kids (mean=12, sd=12)
- Preliminary results:
 - 33% (26/79) don't believe in diagnosing CAS under three
 - 47% (37/79) wouldn't say "CAS" to parents of children under three

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