
Psychosocial and Cognitive Implications of
Cleft Lip and Palate in School Age Youth:
The Role of the School Based Speech Language
Pathologist

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Cognitive Implications

- Not at increased risk for global delays
 - Youth with syndromes which include a cleft are especially at risk
 - Early assessment/intervention is important
 - May demonstrate decreased school achievement independent of IQ
 - Increased risk for learning disabilities
 - Reading Disabilities
 - Verbal/language based difficulties can have significant impact in classroom
 - *Areas of intervention for SLP*
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Cognitive Implications - Adulthood

- Young adults with clefts attend and graduate from college at same rate as siblings
 - No significant employment differences
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Factors Affecting Cognitive Performance

- Teachers and parents found to have lower expectations of youth with clefts regardless of ability
 - Youth with clefts demonstrate greater inhibition globally (including in school)
 - Language delays may affect performance on standard measures
 - Missed classroom time due to therapies, appointments, etc.
 - *Areas of intervention for SLP*
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Psychosocial Implications - Family

- Diagnosis history/Family reaction is significant
 - Emotional reactions include guilt, anger, fear, protectiveness
 - Unresolved emotional difficulties will impact family throughout life
 - Bonding concerns
 - Impact of potential stress, marital conflict, etc.
 - *Areas of intervention for SLP*
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Psychosocial Implications – Preschool age

- Parenting style
 - Youth start to notice facial differences
 - Peers start to notice differences
 - Response/script important for youth adjustment
 - *Areas of intervention for SLP*
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Psychosocial Implications – School age

- Continued risk of increased stress due to differences
- Predictors of difficulty:
 - Teasing
 - Speech difficulties
- Self-report:
 - Feel more alienated from peers
 - Increased feelings of fear, anger, upset
- *Areas of intervention for SLP*

Psychosocial Implications - Adolescents

- Increased role in medical decision making
- Professionals should understand youth's attributions of any difficulties
- Overall slight increase in inhibition and social introversion
- *Areas of intervention for SLP*

Psychosocial Implications

- No increased risk for personality disorders or serious psychopathology
- Parental/Family adjustment directly correlated with youth adjustment
- Accurate and developmentally appropriate medical knowledge facilitates adjustment
- *Areas of intervention for SLP*

Mental Health Services within CLP/Craniofacial Team

- ****Every patient seen by Psychologist**
 - Not always indicative of a concern
- Consultant
 - Screen cognitive, emotional, social, family functioning
 - Evaluate current academic services (IEP) and past cognitive evaluations
 - Brief, solution-focused interventions
 - Surgery preparation, Social skills, etc
- Referral
 - More in-depth, long term services
 - Evaluation, treatment

Common Mental Health Interventions

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Social Skills
- Play therapy
 - Medical play

Role of Speech Language Pathologist

- Awareness
- Monitor/assess cognitive and psychosocial functioning
- Advocate
- Model appropriate interactions
- Liaison with parents
- Knowledge of local referrals
- Educate staff/community

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Resources

- www.acpa-cpf.org
- www.cleftline.org
- www.aap.org
- www.changingfaces.org.uk
- www.nffr.org
- School social workers/psychologists
- CHW Psychology

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