



Communication Options: Supporting Families in Navigating the Controversies

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Overview

- Decision making processes
- Communication options re-conceptualized
- Physician roles in supporting families
- Resources for further information

Goals of Early Intervention

- Support family in creating a language rich environment
- Capitalize on sensitive periods
- Promote healthy emotional context for development
- Support family learning and decision making

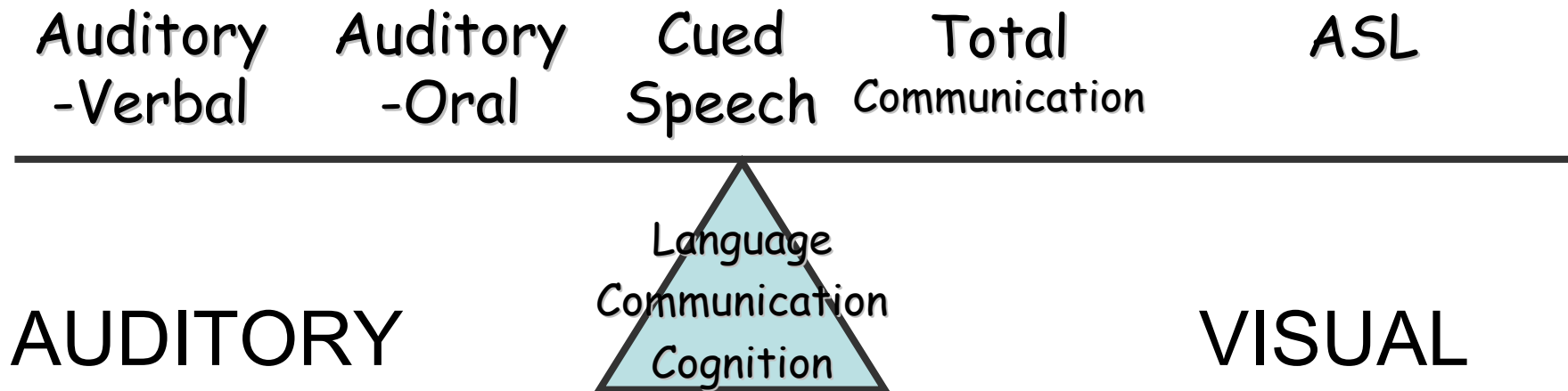
Decisions...decisions

- Families face several complex decisions
 - During period of intense adjustment
- Beyond communication options...
 - program choices/features
 - family roles
 - hearing aid technologies
 - medical considerations

And to complicate matters...

- Lack of consensus among professionals
 - About best practices
- Advancing technologies
 - lags in documentation of advantages for infants (bilateral CI)
 - “moving targets” complicate interpretation of existing evidence
 - may feel pressure to make choices to capitalize on sensitive periods¹

Methodology Continuum



Auditory Verbal

- Guide, counsel & support parents as **primary models** for spoken language
- Help children integrate **listening** into development of communication and social skills
- Auditory-verbal development through 1 to 1 teaching
- Families expected to develop listening and **language rich environment** for child

Auditory-Oral

- Encourages maximum use of **residual hearing** and hearing technologies
- **Auditory** learning focus +
- **Visual** supports (speech reading) to aid communicative development
- Families encouraged to create optimal oral learning environment
- High expectations for **spoken language**

Cued Speech



- Visual communication system
 - *eight handshapes in four different placements near the face*
 - *+ mouth movements*
 - *make the sounds of spoken language look different from each other (mom, Bob, pop)*
- Supports spoken language learning & literacy; adverse listening situations
- Families learn to use the system through workshops and practice

Total Communication

- Combines all means to communicate with the child
 - Signs (English-based signing system)
 - Listening, Speechreading
 - Natural gestures
 - Body language
- Encourages simultaneous use of speech & sign to promote access to spoken language
- Families must gain sign fluency and consistently sign when speaking

ASL/Bilingual-Bicultural

- Deaf children learn ASL as the primary language
 - English is learned as a second language once ASL is mastered
- Prepares child for social access to the Deaf Community
- Family learns about Deaf culture; invest in learning ASL; provide child access to fluent users of ASL
- Devices may or may not be emphasized

For more information:

<http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/>

Varying Perspectives

- What they share

- Desire to maximize language development
- Provide language rich environment
- Support for literacy
- Support families in their roles as primary language models

- Where they differ

- Methods to achieve goals
- Vision for the future
- View of the role of visual support/language
- Value placed on devices/speech production

Methodology reframed

Fully
Auditory
Communicator

Mostly
Auditory
Communicator

Mostly
Visual
Communicator

Fully
Visual
Communicator

A

A_v

AV



V_A

V

Shifts the Focus...

- From program philosophy
- To child's learning needs
- And a dynamic view of learning
 - Requires ongoing evaluation
- Recognizes the consistent finding of wide ranges in performance outcomes

Variables Affecting Progress

- Age at diagnosis
- Etiology
- Device use & effectiveness
- Auditory learning abilities
- Health status of child
- Personal-social adjustment of family
- Family involvement
- Skills of the service providers
- Parenting Skills
- Child's temperament & learning styles
- Intellectual abilities; secondary disabilities
- Cultural values
- Socioeconomic issues

Children with CIs

- Some CI teams require AVT or spoken language programs
 - Does this limit parental decision making authority?
 - Will all children succeed in the approach?
- Factors associated with positive outcomes
 - Age at implantation ²
 - Pre-implant use of residual hearing²

Children with CIs

- Signing and CIs – Evidence is mixed
 - Higher levels of speech & language associated with programs that are highly auditory ^{3, 4}
 - Yet, recent studies show that early implanted children quickly transition from sign to spoken language ^{5, 6}
 - Families will consider varying ways to promote communication access in year 1

Considerations in Decision Making

- Family values and goals
- Community resources
- Family resources (what level of commitment?)
- Timing of the information
- Finding unique “fit”
 - May change as the child’s needs change
 - Adaptable approach with “safety nets”
 - Program features and expectations

Decisions less “weighty” when...

- Not “set in stone”
 - Can be evaluated and adjusted over time
- Can be combined in creative ways to achieve a variety of goals
- Can be “tailored” to address individual needs

Key Points for Pediatricians

- Does the family have options?
 - Know your community resources
 - How to link with EI providers
 - Are specialists familiar with this population?
- Know that one method will not fit all needs
 - Process of decision making is ongoing
 - Complex, guided by the ongoing early intervention process

Key Points for Pediatricians

- Receive progress reports from early intervention
 - If developmental progress is of concern, further evaluation may be needed
- Provide input to the early intervention team about the child's
 - Health needs
 - Developmental status
- Support families in focusing on child's needs

Key Points for Pediatricians

- Understand the complexity of this process for families
 - Many children can learn orally
 - Some will need other kinds of supports to be successful
 - Success is the ultimate goal
- Families say they wish for:
 - Objective information to support decision making
 - Links to community resources
 - Opportunities to talk with other families
 - Respect for the choices they make

Provide Questions to Guide Families

- Do you know what the options are?
- Do you understand the options?
- Have you examined them in person?
- Do you understand all test results?
- How much time do you have to devote to learning the methodology?

Beginnings, 2002 (see chart pdf)

Most important decisions....

- Parental decision to trust in their ability to parent this child
- Decision to view the child as a capable learner

See: Schwartz, S. (1996)
Choices in Deafness.
Woodbine House

Family Resources

- www.beginningsvcs.com
- Text – Choices in Deafness – Sue Schwartz (Woodbine House, 1996)
- www.babyhearing.org
- For further information:
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References

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