

# Promoting a Medical Home for Infants or Children who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing: Using Virtual Podcasts for Professional Development

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## BACKGROUND

- Congenital hearing loss affects 1-3 of every 1,000 born infants. Undetected hearing loss can hinder early speech and language development.
- The 2019 Joint Committee on Infant Hearing Statement recommends that screening occur by 1 month, that positive screenings be followed by comprehensive hearing evaluations by 2 months, and that fitting occur by 3 months. While early identification of permanent hearing loss is critical, it has little value without timely intervention.
- Research and professionals support early intervention and treatment to improve the language and academic outcomes of DHH children. Many systemic barriers contribute to delays in obtaining the type of comprehensive and coordinated care that children might receive within a Medical Home. Potential barriers include a lack of providers specializing in infant diagnostic evaluations in the family's geographic region, the need for multiple visits and long wait times, insurance type and lack of coverage, health literacy, and a lack of resources.
- Research and professionals support early intervention and treatment to improve the language and academic outcomes of DHH children.

## OBJECTIVE

Providing family-centered healthcare in the community, coordinating care between providers, and delivering health care that is accessible, continuous, comprehensive, compassionate, culturally effective and efficient.

Focusing on helping families to understand hearing loss, hearing aids, and various communication options, and facilitating early intervention.

Creating accessible online pediatric-focused podcasts can be disseminated as a tool to develop a medical home.

## METHODS

- 1) Develop an interdisciplinary, online podcast episode as a resource to help audiologists and interdisciplinary team members better provide a medical home to improve early intervention, and language acquisition to promote optimal developmental outcomes and to ultimately improve quality of life for children and families.
- 2) Questions for the podcast interviews were developed by an internal team based on the background and objectives of this project.
- 3) Two interviews were conducted with professionals in the field of Pediatric Audiology who facilitate care for infants and children with hearing loss. Both professionals provided insight into the current practices, barriers, and opportunities that families encounter while navigating the clinical appointments for pediatric hearing loss diagnosis.
  - Dr. Chelsea Cole, Audiology Director of The John Tracy Clinic
  - Dr. Debra Schrader, Pediatric and Adult Cochlear Implant Director of USC Caruso Department of Otolaryngology –Head and Neck Surgery.
- 4) The interviews were edited to create a Podcast for interdisciplinary education purposes. A supplement handout was created listing and describing interdisciplinary virtual resources for those managing care for children with hearing loss. The podcast resource and supplemental handout provide opportunities to tailor counseling in support of reducing barriers for families who are navigating the identification, diagnosis, and treatment pathway for infants and children newly identified with hearing loss.

## RESULTS

- Quotes from the Podcast interviews highlighting the importance of a medical home for children with hearing loss to reduce barriers when navigating the identification, diagnosis, and treatment of children with hearing loss.
- Dr. Chelsea Cole indicated, "having the Medical Home for audiology is important because it allows for there to be a team with the same goals in mind for that child." Dr. Cole shared that "Since the Audiologist is often the first stop for these children, it is important for the audiologist of the pediatric program to have good relationships with the pediatrician and other outside referral sources so that they can initiate communication and assist the family and reaching these different providers. The case manager is able to follow up and make sure that all the different timelines are being met, the appropriate referrals are being made, and children are having access to the care that they need to continue the process and meet these goals in a timely manner." It's really important for the families to feel validated and know that they're doing the right thing. So they've already taken appropriate necessary steps to come to that appointment today and to continue on that trajectory to help their child reach their maximum potential, I think, encouraging them - providing them as much counseling and education as you can in that appointment, and providing them as many resources as possible.

*"It's really important for the families to feel validated and know that they're doing the right thing." – Dr. Chelsea Cole*

- Dr. Debra Schrader highlighted, "You have to start with making that family feel supported, making that family feel valued that they're an important and they're integral to their child's success and education. I think that educational process takes time, we tend to think that if we just keep talking, and we keep telling that there will be learning and understanding. I don't believe that that is an effective way to increase parent knowledge, and if we want to keep increased parent understanding and knowledge, we have to teach a little bit [and] check for understanding. Then assist and then teach a little more, and we do that in small increments, and that will take time. That's going to mean additional clinical appointments, additional counseling, and it's also again the advantage of the medical home. You've got professionals in that medical home, your audiologist, your speech pathologist, your educator on the team and using those resources to help educate that parent, and then bringing in our community resources, so that we're all centered on child's success and that we're not competing and sending competing or conflicting pieces of information to the families as they are trying to learn."
- Dr. Debra Schrader also emphasized the importance of ensuring that family members are a critical component of the team "I want families to feel comfortable asking questions. It's okay to say, 'I don't know', it's okay to say, 'I don't understand what my child's hearing loss means' it's okay to ask for support. It's okay to say 'that appointment might be hard for me to get to, because I don't have transportation'. The more we hear and we have to listen to the family's voice, the more we can support. To build family support you've got to build that trust, and that trust comes through, I think, conversation and genuine communication."

*"I think that educational process takes time, we tend to think that if we just keep talking and we keep telling [families what we know] that there will be learning and understanding." "The more we hear and we have to listen to the family's voice, the more we can support." – Dr. Debra Schrader*



## CONCLUSIONS

We created resources for professionals to promote professional development and consider options to counsel families who are experiencing an infant or child with hearing loss. These accessible online pediatric-focused podcasts can be disseminated as a tool to develop a medical home for audiologists and other health professionals across the U.S.

## REFERENCES

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