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Introduction

- Initial signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often look like hearing loss.
- Audiologists are often one of the first providers to see a child who is ultimately diagnosed with ASD.
- The American Academy of Audiology and the American Speech-Language Hearing Association both state that it is within an audiologist's scope of practice to perform screening measures for the purposes of initial identification of persons with communication disorders, which include ASD.
- Little is known about the current practice and comfort level of audiologists in administering such screening tools or whether appropriate referrals are being made to facilitate early identification of ASD.

Methods

- 37-item web-based survey with multiple choice and open-response questions, developed using Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap)
- Survey distribution included audiology listservs, professional organizations and social media message boards and personal/professional contacts
- Dates of distribution: Sept 15, 2017 to Feb 1, 2018
- Responses obtained from audiologists across the U.S.

Results

Of the 211 audiologists surveyed, less than 5% currently administer screening measures to pediatric patients who show signs of ASD

Reasons For Not Administering ASD Screening (n=57)

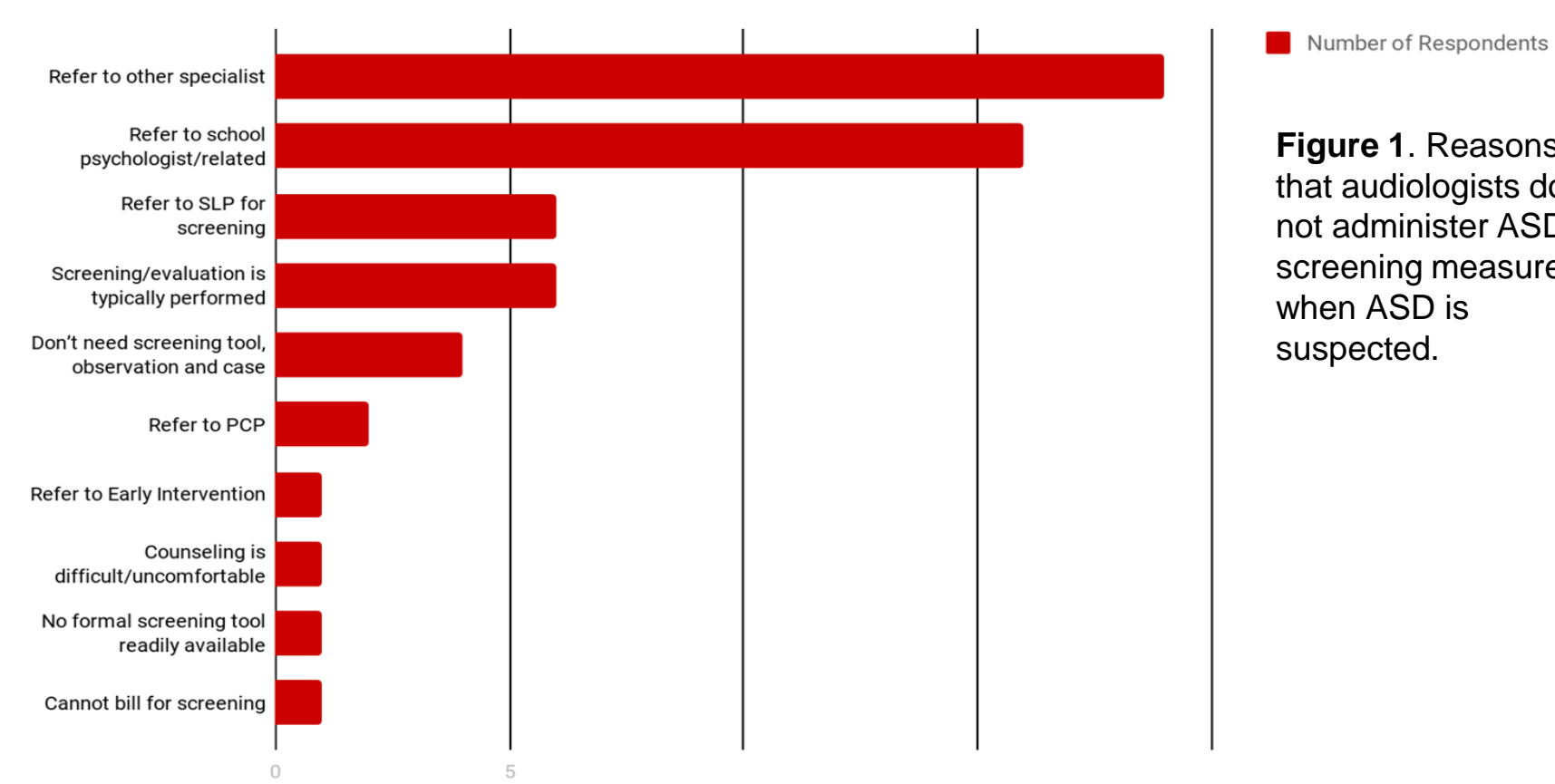
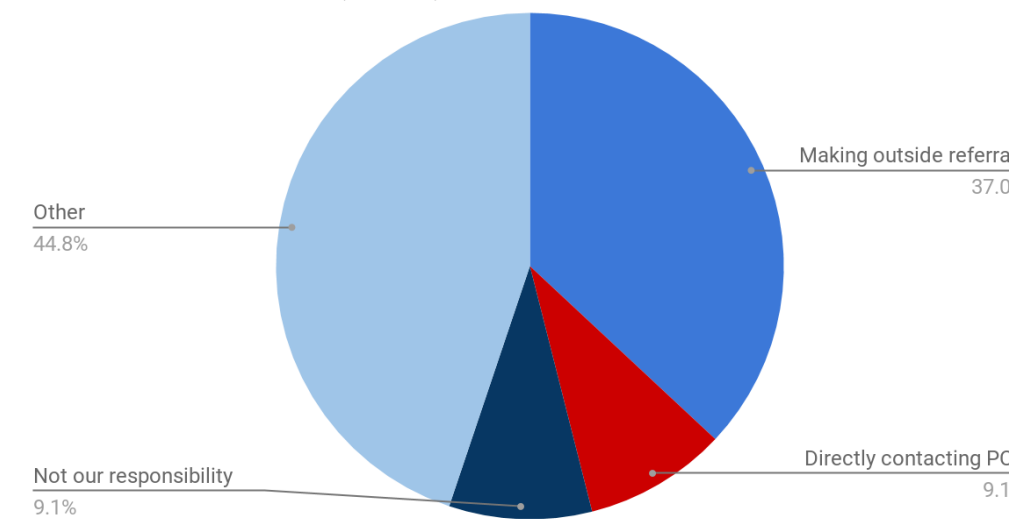


Figure 1. Reasons that audiologists do not administer ASD screening measures when ASD is suspected.

Figure 2. Of the 211 audiologists surveyed, 78% believe they are currently doing enough in terms of early identification of ASD in pediatric patients. The top three reasons that clinicians believe they are doing enough are shown in the graph (left). The most common reason listed involves outside referrals or assuming other providers will administer a screening.

Why Audiologists Believe They Are Doing Enough Regarding ASD Screening/Diagnosis (n=165)



Why Audiologists Believe They Are Not Doing Enough Regarding ASD Screening/Referral (n=40)

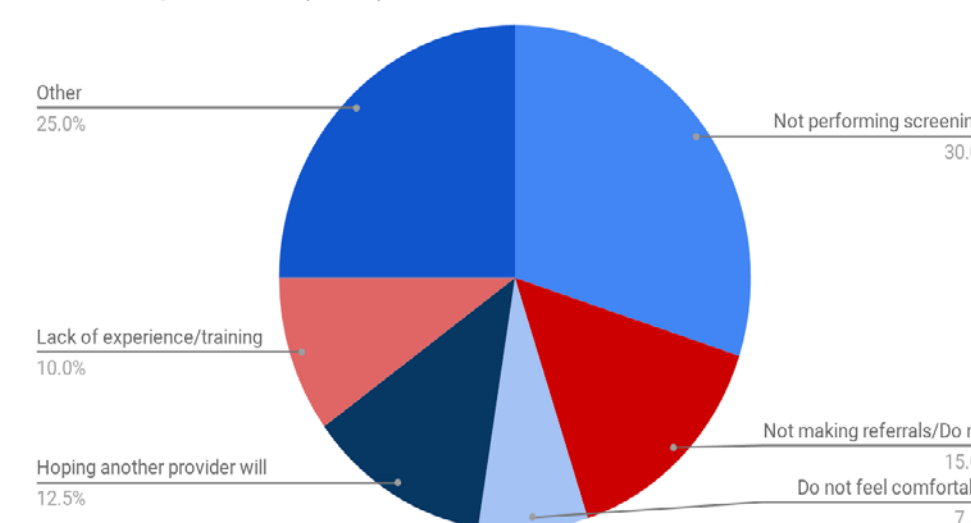


Figure 3. Of the 211 audiologists surveyed, 22% believe that they are not doing enough in terms of screening and referring patients with suspected ASD. Of those responses most audiologists report that they are not performing the screenings but would like the ability to do so.

Discussion

- Audiologists disagree about whether screening for ASD is within their scope of practice.
- The majority of audiologists are not administering ASD screenings due to:
 - Belief that it is not within their scope of practice
 - Lack of training and education
- Many audiologists report that making referrals to other professionals for evaluation is sufficient.
- There are red flags for ASD that may only be seen by an audiologist. The most common of these are:
 - Ear sensitivity (will not tolerate otoscopy, tympanometry or headphones)
 - Difficult to test or cannot be conditioned
 - Inconsistent auditory behaviors (e.g., responds to environmental sounds not but not their name, responds better to music/speech vs. tones)
 - Family suspects hearing loss
- With increased training and education, audiologists could play a vital role in early detection and identification of children with ASD.

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