

Perspectives of Dutch health professionals regarding auditory processing disorders; a focus group study

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INTRODUCTION

- ▶ Characteristics and diagnostic procedures of children with suspected auditory processing disorders (APD) are topics of ongoing debate
- ▶ Professionals are in need of more clarity and uniformity about the pathway of care for these children
- ▶ The present study forms part of a project, leading to a Dutch Position Statement on APD

RESEARCH AIM

- ▶ To explore the perspectives of professionals from Dutch Audiological Centres (ACs) regarding definition, symptomatology, comorbidity and diagnostics of APD in children

METHOD

- ▶ Design: qualitative, focus group study
- ▶ 45 representatives from Dutch ACs participated in five focus groups, where 7 disciplines and 22 locations were evenly distributed
- ▶ Audio recordings of the focus group interviews were transcribed literally; transcriptions were analyzed with Atlas.ti
- ▶ A combination of thematic and open coding techniques was applied

RESULTS

Theme: definition

- ▶ Definition, symptomatology and comorbidity are subjects that are interrelated; professionals differed in their perspective regarding the existence of 'pure' APD in children (see fig.1)

Theme: diagnostic procedures

- ▶ Professionals agreed on the multidisciplinary approach that ACs already use, both in diagnostics and intervention. However, they differed in opinions about the use and usefulness of auditory processing tests as part of this approach (see quotes 1, 2 and 3)

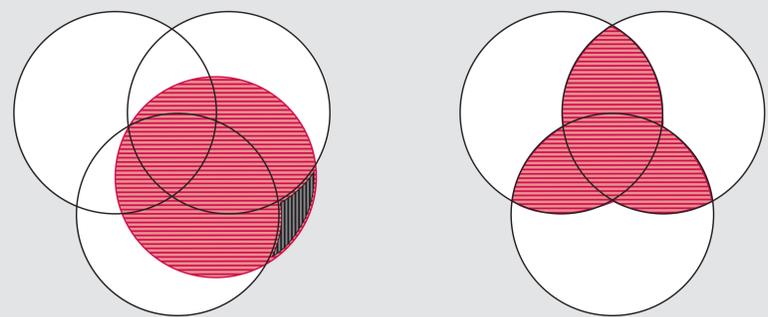
Theme: clinical reasoning

- ▶ Decisions of professionals are based on all components of evidence-based practice (scientific evidence, experience, clients' values and organisational context), however there is uncertainty because of a small and controversial evidence base

APD versus Listening problems

"(Pure) APD does exist" (but is scarce)

"APD does not exist"



APD Listening problems

Quote 1: 'But regarding these (auditory) skills, it is always difficult, because: what do these small subtests mean for classroom functioning? And that's actually the same as in neuropsychological assessment... (p16, behavioural scientist)

Quote 2: 'But what they (= AP-tests) sometimes do prove, is the question: will an fm system work, and sometimes you see that they (= children) don't fail speech in noise areas but on other areas of auditory processing. And then we use this as an argument to say that an fm system is probably no solution.' (p13, audiologist)

Quote 3: 'Well, because scientific studies proved that auditory test batteries don't assess what they should assess. So that children fail who actually have attention problems. That's why we chose [...] not to use them any more.' (p15, speech-language pathologist).

CONCLUSIONS

- ▶ Dutch professionals' perspectives differ regarding two main subjects: terminology (APD or listening problems?) and use of AP tests
- ▶ Besides these main differences, there seems to be agreement on the multidisciplinary approach in diagnostics and intervention

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