

# Counselling parents of children with hearing loss – an interactive approach

## Background

With the presence of newborn hearing screening expanding worldwide, more and more paediatric audiologists see infants with hearing loss – and their parents. Seeing parents of newborn babies is new to many paediatric audiologists and presents a counselling task different from what they may be used to. It contains explaining, understanding, involvement, listening, and much, much more. It is a task of many difficulties and challenges.

As described by several leading audiologists<sup>1</sup> only about 50% of the information provided about diagnosis and treatment to a patient is retained by the patient. And of the retained information about half is remembered incorrectly. Furthermore, anxiety inhibits retention of information. This also applies to the parents of children with hearing loss even though they are not the actual patient.

Finally, not many audiology degrees include classes on counselling and/or psychology which make this task even more challenging to audiologists who do not feel well-enough prepared to provide parents with the counselling they need.



## Helpful counselling tools?

Through interviews with paediatric professionals, Oticon found out what tools and help they use – and need – when counselling parents of children with hearing loss. Many have different ways of making the counselling process with parents easier but it is obvious that the tools available are in many different shapes and forms and that there is a need to have access to a tool that can provide support to many areas of the counselling process.

## Developing a counselling tool

Before completing the development of our counselling people, clinics and hospitals in the paediatric audiology field around the world were interviewed to ensure that the right information was included and presented in the best possible format.

Furthermore, Karen Anderson, Ph.D. who has over 25 years of experience working with children with hearing loss and their families was contacted. Doctor Anderson became involved in the project and worked as a consultant and an active member of the project group. All text in the tool is written by Doctor Anderson.

## Result

The research and work with Karen Anderson resulted in a multimedia counselling CD. The purpose of the CD is to provide a tool which supports the paediatric professional in his or her already established counselling process. The expertise and knowledge of the professional is imperative to use the CD with optimal results. This is also why the CD should only be used with an audiologist present and never by parents alone. The CD consists of pictures, explanations, animations and audio examples – which all support the various areas on the CD.

There are numerous areas to touch upon and talk about when counselling parents of children with hearing loss and including them all on a CD would be impossible. We have therefore selected 5 main areas for the CD – based on input from audiologists and Doctor Anderson.

The areas represent topics that are important often covered at some point during a counselling process. For a counselling process to be successful it is important to listen to the parents and find out what their needs are at the specific point in time. Provide them with the information they need when they need it. For that same reason the navigation menu on the CD is circular – there is no set counselling flow; a topic may be chosen based on the need of the particular situation.

## The 5 areas



## Evaluation

This section can help in the explanation of processes and methods used to evaluate a child's hearing. It is ideal for reviewing previous procedures or for describing an upcoming test session.



## The Ear

Using animations, this section shows how sound travels through the ear and can be used to explain how the ear works – and where there may be problems which can cause loss of hearing. Furthermore, it is also possible to show where in the ear the different types of hearing loss are located.



## Your Child's Hearing

Using an interactive audiogram it is possible to enter the individual child's audiogram and use it to explain to parents which areas can be more challenging to their child.

It is possible to play sounds, speech and speech in environmental situations to show how a specific hearing loss affects the understanding. This can also be especially efficient to help teachers understand the problems a student with hearing loss may have understanding in class.



## Recommendations

Helping parents understand and use various technologies can be challenging. This section provides illustrations to support the explanation of technologies, how to use them and the daily care of them. Also included is a section on early intervention to help parents understand the many resources available to help them raise a child with hearing loss.



## Learning Language

This section provides an overview of the developmental stages of language during childhood. For different age groups it is possible to see the level of language and speech which can be expected of a normal hearing child. Finally, the section contains input and encouragement to parents to participate in their child's language development – with them as an active party the child will get much further!



Very little text is visible on the individual screens – it is not the purpose of the tool for parents to read off the screen. However, the CD contains hidden information boxes for each screen – the text in the boxes can help the audiologist remember major points worth conveying for each subject and the tips can also be particularly beneficial for new audiologists or audiologists who do not work with children on a regular basis.



Please visit the Oticon booth to get a demonstration of the program and to enquire how to obtain a counselling tool for your clinic. Also visit the poster by Karen Anderson & Johnnie Sexton; "Keys to Effective Parent Counselling; Setting the Stage for Optimal Child Outcomes"

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<sup>1</sup> Margolis, R.H. (2004, Aug. 3). Boosting memory with informational counseling: Helping Patients understand the nature of disorders and how to manage them. *The ASHA Leader*, pp. 10-11, 28. Luterman, D. (2006, March 21). The counseling relationship. *The ASHA Leader*, 11(4), 8-9, 33.