

Are School Clinicians Prepared to Treat Stuttering?

Results from a Nationwide Survey^{1, 2}

Background

- Many school speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are uncomfortable assessing and treating children who stutter,³⁻⁵ possibly due to insufficient training in their graduate programs^{6, 7}
- School SLPs may feel particularly unprepared due to a lack of ongoing experience with stuttering and limited in-service opportunities⁸

Thus, children who stutter may not receive adequate services in the schools

- This study examined knowledge of and skills for assessing and treating stuttering of 428 school-based SLPs who responded to a 49-question survey

Method

- *Participants*
 - SLPs from counties in PA, NJ, NY, CT, VA, CA, FL, TX, MI, and WA with 200,000 residents and cities with populations over 170,000
 - Of the 428 respondents:
 - 9.0% held BA/BS degrees; 88.4% had MA/MS degrees; 0.5% had doctorates
 - 69.5% held the ASHA Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC-SLP)
- *Coursework*
 - 95.2% had taken coursework in stuttering
 - Undergrad: 46.5% took 1 semester; 15.0% took ½ semester, 32.9% had no coursework or only a few lectures
 - Graduate: 69.4% took 1 semester; 10.6% took ½ semester; 12.8% had no coursework or only a few lectures
 - Only 66.3% indicated that their instructor's primary area of specialty was fluency disorders.
- *Experience*
 - Average experience = 16.05 years overall
 - Average experience with children who stutter = 11.13 years
 - Average yearly caseload was 50.69 students
 - 10.8% worked with preschoolers
 - 7.2% worked with kindergarten children
 - 63.1% worked with elementary children
 - 13.1% worked with middle school children
 - 5.9% worked with high school children
 - 64.8% of participants' caseloads of children who stutter were white non-Hispanic
 - 16.2% were African American
 - 13.4% were Hispanic Americans
 - 1.9% were Asian Americans
 - 3.7% were other ethnicities
- *General Knowledge*
 - 48.5% had not heard of ASHA's Special Interest Division (Group) for Fluency Disorders or Board-Recognized Specialization in Fluency Disorders (BRS-FD)
 - 66.4% did not know how to contact a Board-Recognized Specialist in Fluency Disorders

Results

- Of all 428 respondents:
 - 33.5% could not accurately identify the onset characteristics of stuttering
 - 66.3% did not know the incidence of stuttering in the general population
 - 83.0% did not know about the latest genetic research in stuttering
 - 73.1% indicated that they knew how to teach stuttering modification techniques; however, 44.3% of these did not know how to teach cancellations, 33.0% did not know how to teach pull-outs, and 59.3% did not know how to teach preparatory sets
 - 75.7% had heard about the Speech Easy and other assistive devices; however, 74.4% of these did not know about long-term effects of these devices
 - **80.4% wanted to be able to attend workshops on the stuttering in general**
81.6% wanted to be able to attend workshops on the *assessment* of stuttering
92.5% wanted to be able to attend workshops on the *treatment* of stuttering
- Of SLPs who had taken a full semester of graduate courses in stuttering ($N = 246$)
 - 65.0% did not know how to contact a Board-Recognized Specialist in Fluency Disorders
 - 54.2% do not use attitude scales to assess stuttering
 - 64.4% do not know about intervention techniques to address bullying
 - 23.0% could not identify the core behaviors of stuttering
 - 39.5% were not comfortable with working with children who stutter
 - 42.6% could not differentiate between the two main stuttering treatment approaches (fluency shaping and stuttering modification)
 - 48.6% did not know how to contact support groups for children who stutter
- Of SLPs who held a state license and the ASHA CCCs ($N = 291$)
 - 63.3% did not know how to contact a Board-Recognized Specialist in Fluency Disorders
 - 57.7% do not use attitude scales to assess stuttering
 - 64.7% do not know about intervention techniques to address bullying
 - 20.6% could not identify the core behaviors of stuttering
 - 40.1% were not comfortable with working with children who stutter
 - 43.1% could not differentiate between the two main approaches to stuttering therapy
 - 48.3% did not know how to contact support groups for children who stutter

Conclusion

- Many clinicians are unaware of key issues in the evaluation and treatment of stuttering:
 - how to contact a Board-Recognized Specialist in Fluency Disorders or support groups
 - how to use attitude scales to assess stuttering
 - intervention techniques to address bullying
 - how to teach most stuttering modification techniques
 - long-term effects of assistive devices

Clinicians need more information so they can better serve children who stutter

References

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