Needs and concerns of parents raising children who stutter: A developmental perspective

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Much has been written about the effects of stuttering on children, adolescents and adults relative to social experiences, academic achievement and overall well-being. Still, very little empirical evidence exists for any impact raising a child who stutters has on parents. A recent study of parent experiences involved 108 families in Australia (Langevin, Packman, & Onslow, 2010) in which the authors examined parent perceptions of the impact of stuttering on their preschool children and themselves. Langevin et al. determined that the most often identified experience was that of worry or anxiety. In general, the findings of the Langevin et al. study underscore the importance of recognizing both child and parent stresses when determining approaches to assessment and intervention.

While the Langevin et al. study provides some of the best evidence on parent perceptions of children who stutter, its focus is that of the parents of preschool children, specifically those either on the waiting list for or receiving therapy through the Lidcombe Program in Australia. These are valuable data in that they reflect the experience of parents soon after the stuttering diagnosis; however little is known about the perceptions of parents whose children are older, farther from the diagnosis, or have been in or completed therapy. This presentation will describe survey results of parents with children who stutter from a developmental perspective; examining changes that occur as children age. Using a cross-sectional method, family members of the U.S.-based Friends: The National Association of Young People Who Stutter fill out surveys examining their present day concerns and needs with attention to causal considerations, impact of stuttering on the family, strategies used to cope, how needs and concerns have changed as their child aged and advice they would give others. The project is on-going. Results will be presented with attention to factors related to changes in needs and concerns. Knowledge about the process families undergo as they raise their children can be beneficial to those with a new diagnosis of stuttering. This information will aid caregivers and service providers in counseling.

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