Social Skills in Adolescents Who Use Cochlear Implants

Cantwell, Megan (School: Veritas Academy)

According to the National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders, 38,000 children with severe to profound hearing loss in the United States have received a cochlear implant. Research has shown that many children and young adults with cochlear implants struggle with friendships. To further understand the cause of this difficulty, the normed Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and a modified version of the medically accepted Profile of Social Difficulty (POSD) was administered to 102 parents of 11-17 year old cochlear implant recipients. The parents of a control group of 116, 11-17 year olds with normal hearing were asked the same questions. The results demonstrated a statistically significant difference in the social skill outcomes of the 11-17 year old cochlear implant recipients as compared to their peers with normal hearing. The hearing impaired group had statistically significant lower scores in the areas of social response with friends and acquaintances. There was not a statistically significant difference in the areas of social response with adults or social initiation with friends, adults, and acquaintances. The social response skill set includes appropriately reading body language, responding to humor appropriately, and staying on topic in a conversation. The social initiation skill set includes starting and entering a conversation, appropriately using humor, and inviting others. Further research is needed to investigate whether there is a correlation between scores on audiological testing and social skill scores.

Awards Won:
Second Award of $2,000
University of Arizona: Tuition Scholarship Award