Parent Perceptions of Social Skill Development of Adolescent Cochlear Implant Recipients: A Comparative Study across Various Populations

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Approximately 38,000 children with severe-to-profound hearing loss in the United States use a cochlear implant. Research demonstrates that adolescent cochlear implant recipients experience double the rate of peer victimization as compared to the national average and four times the rate of coercion and intentional social exclusion. Adolescent cochlear implant recipients frequently struggle to understand social nuances and nonverbal cues. Youth with clinical diagnoses of High Functioning Autism (HFA) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) experience increased peer victimization along with deficits in social cognition and difficulties understanding social nuances. To understand similarities in social skill deficits across communication disorder diagnoses, the clinically validated Social Responsiveness Scale-2 (SRS-2) and the normed Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) were administered to 313 parents of adolescents with ADHD, HFA, or typical development. Parents of adolescent cochlear implant recipients (N=82) completed a modified version of the SRS-2, the Social Communication Questionnaire, and the SDQ. Parents of adolescents with HFA, ADHD, and cochlear implant recipients all reported that their adolescents had significantly more difficulties in social cognition, communication, and restrictive and repetitive behaviors than parents of typically developing adolescents. Parents reported that typically developing adolescents had the least difficulty, followed by adolescent cochlear implant users, then adolescents with ADHD, and then adolescents with HFA. Further research should investigate intervention efficacy that targets social cognition, communication, and restrictive and repetitive behaviors for adolescent cochlear implant recipients.

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