

Abstract EFAS/DGA 2007

School Education, out of School Education, Vocational Training and Employment Status of Young People who grew up with Cochlear Implants

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Background/aims

Since its start in 1992, more than 250 deaf children were supplied with cochlear implants at the CI-center Salzburg. Many of them have now grown up to adolescents and young adults. The purpose of this study was to evaluate schooling, out of school education and employment status of young people with cochlear implants as a critical evaluation of CI in children. To our knowledge only few studies on this subject are published up to now.

Methods

64 candidates, between 12- 21 years old, pre- perilingual deafened , implanted in our clinic, with at least 3 years of hearing experience with CI, and their parents were invited for structured interviews. In addition all adolescents up to age 17, parents and teachers were asked to answer the 'Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire' (SDQ). Normal hearing persons, homogenous concerning age, gender and education, served as control groups.

Results

52 out of 64 participated. Their level of school education corresponded with the educational level of the parents ($p=0,0005$, $p=0,047$) and with speech-test outcomes (monosyllables $p=0,03$, sentences $p=0,02$). At time of survey 30 out of 37 pupils attended mainstream schools. They did not differ from Austrian standard pupils ($p>0.05$), concerning the quota of attended secondary-, secondary grammar- and vocational schools. Nevertheless the parents rated the career chances of their children with CI less optimistic than parents of normal hearing pupils ($p=0.0002$). 15 participants were already out of school: 2 were at university, 7 had regular apprenticeships, 5 were employed and one was unemployed. All were wearing their CI continuously at a daily basis. The prevalence rate of mental health disorders was not increased, compared to normal hearing adolescents ($p>0.05$, result of SDQ).

Conclusion

Most are integrated in the hearing world, concerning their schooling, out of school education, -and employment status.

