

Changing Outcomes for Children with Hearing Loss and Complex Needs – through the lens of Attachment Theory

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Approximately 35% of children with hearing loss had additional needs in the Longitudinal Outcomes of Children with Hearing Impairment (LOCHI) study (Cupples, et al., 2018). Despite early identification and intervention, the presence of additional needs can affect language and communication outcomes in children who are deaf or hard of hearing (Cupples, et al., 2018). Parent-child interaction/attachment lays the foundation for language and communication development in young children (Landy, 2009). This talk will discuss how a holistic interdisciplinary approach at NextSense Waverley site enhanced the language and communication outcomes of young children with hearing loss with complex needs. The talk will focus on ‘attachment theory’ as central to the methodology developed by the team, providing early evidence of enhanced outcomes using this approach. The ‘COMBINE’ methodology approach will be outlined in terms of attachment theory (Landy, 2009; Greenspan & Weider, 2009); the rationale for adapting Auditory Verbal Therapy (Rhoades & Duncan, 2017); the critical role of a team around the child (ECIA, 2016), and development and implementation of an individualized interdisciplinary team (ECIA, 2016). Objective and subjective outcomes data will be presented. Professionals working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families also need the clinical skill set and supportive ongoing learning environments to effectively engage in collaborative team practice; build capacity in families, and deliver routines-based intervention to optimize the language and communication development of children with hearing loss with complex needs. Further research is needed to establish the efficacy of the COMBINE approach and the professional training required by professionals to effectively deliver this approach.