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Presentation: A holistic approach is needed to assess communication and other impacts of hearing loss, engage families, and support the wellbeing of children with hearing loss and their families

Being able to communicate effectively is key to the wellbeing of children with hearing loss (CWHL) [1,2] regardless of communication modality [3]. Traditionally researchers examining communication outcomes in CWHL have focussed on standardised tests of speech articulation and phonology and receptive and expressive language. Studies of language development in CWHL show that they can experience delays in semantic, syntactical, phonological, morphological, and pragmatic aspects of language. Relative impacts of these delays on everyday life function and participation are not fully understood. Our understanding of CWHL would be enhanced by thinking more holistically about communication and other outcomes. Other less well studied but important measures of everyday communication include prosody perception and production, narrative language skills and child and parent/teacher perceptions of communication [4,5,6,7]. Tomblin and Hebbeler [8] suggested a change of approach when researching CWHL, to consider multiple influencing variables. A holistic approach that goes beyond current understanding in evidence-based audiology and speech language therapy is needed, with better interprofessional collaboration, accessible family support, cultural advisory services, and more flexible resources for parents. Although difficult to achieve in systems where services and funding are siloed, this may be possible as government and other agencies increasingly recognise that “together is better”.

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Biography

Professor Suzanne Purdy (MSc, DipAud, PhD, CNZM) is Head of the School of Psychology at the University of Auckland and Principal Investigator in the University of Auckland Centre for Brain Research. Previously (2003-2018) she was Head of Speech Science at the University of Auckland. Her academic background is in psychology, speech science and audiology and she has research interests in communication disorders, auditory processing, hearing and neurological conditions. Her research outputs include 185 peer-reviewed articles, book chapters and conference proceedings and 13 government reports. Her research in children has included largescale studies of ear health, hearing and auditory processing in children in the Pacific Islands Families Study and studies exploring auditory processing disorder, language, reading and cognition in children using behavioural and electrophysiological measures.