

Shanda Duggleby Wenzel - University of Alberta

Project Title: Parents' Experiences with Speech-Language Assessment for their Preschool- Aged Children

Project Description:



In speech therapy, the relationship between clients, caregivers and speech therapists is linked with treatment outcomes (Hansen et al., 2023). Therefore, it is critical for speech therapists to encourage that relationship from the earliest encounters (Sylvestre & Gobeil, 2020), including the assessment. Understanding parents' experiences of assessment is important for ensuring that speech-language assessments provide a foundation of trust for speech-language treatment. However, little is known on this topic, particularly about the experiences of parents who are not white, monolingual English-speaking mothers (Duggleby Wenzel et al., 2024).

The objectives of this study are to describe parents' experiences with speech-language assessment, identify potential benefits or harms they may experience during assessment, and conceptualize their

experiences in a way that can be applied to speech therapy practice and service delivery. The research questions are 1) How do parents describe their experiences of speech-language assessment for their preschool-aged child? and 2) What are the main factors that influence parents'; experiences with speech-language assessment?

This qualitative study will use a Patient-Oriented Research (POR) approach (Alberta SPOR Support Unit, 2018) within an Interpretive Description (ID) framework (Thorne, 2016). All parts of the study will be designed in collaboration with patient partners. We will interview parents whose preschoolers have had a speech-language assessment in the past year. We will especially seek parents who are fathers or who speak a different language at home, and look for diversity in assessment settings. During analysis, we will use Bronfenbrenner's (1977) Bioecological Theory of Human Development to explore the impact of context. We will be sensitized to potential power imbalances, and consider findings from an equity, diversity and inclusion lens. To ensure credibility, all parts of the study align with ID and POR. The researcher will engage in reflexivity throughout; all reflections and design decisions will be documented. Participants, parent partners, and a speech therapist will check developing

themes.

We anticipate that a better understanding of parents' experiences will improve speech therapists' assessment practices by minimizing the risk of harm to parents and identifying strategies to build more collaborative relationships with them, thus supporting better outcomes for children. Identifying systemic factors that impact parents' experiences, particularly those which disproportionately impact members of marginalized communities, will guide advocacy efforts. This study is supported in part by funding AbSPORU, and from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Bio:

Shanda Duggleby Wenzel has worked as a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) in Edmonton and area since 2002, and is currently pursuing her PhD in Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Alberta. Shanda's work with families, and her experiences as a parent advocating within the education system, led to her research interest: parents' perceptions of, and experiences with, speech and language services. As a part of her current research, Shanda hopes to explore parents' experiences with speech-language assessment, in order to help SLPs minimize negative experiences and set the stage for strong, collaborative relationships with families. Outside the academic setting, Shanda enjoys spending time with her family, including her wonderful partner and their two children. She also enjoys walking in nature, watching football, and reading.