



Can literacy interventions benefit mental health in children with permanent hearing loss?

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Children with permanent childhood hearing loss (PCHL) seem to be at risk of developing emotional and behaviour difficulties (EBD)¹ but the mediators underlying this relationship are unclear. In 2018, researchers from the UK performed a longitudinal analysis, testing whether language and/or reading comprehension skills in children with PCHL predicted EBD later in adolescence. Jim Stevenson and colleagues enrolled 57 children with PCHL who preferred to communicate using spoken language and 38 children with normal hearing. They then measured their language and reading comprehension between the ages of 6 and 10 years, and again between the ages of 13 and 20 years. EBD was determined at the same time points based on parent and teacher ratings. The researchers found that both poor language and reading comprehension in middle childhood predicted teacher-rated EBD during the teenage years, but not vice versa. While a causal relationship remains to be established, Stevenson et al. suggest that effective language and literacy interventions for children with PCHL might confer benefits on mental health later in adolescence.

Referring to:

Stevenson, J., Pimperton, H., Kreppner, J., Worsfold, S., Terlektsi, E., Mahon, M. & Kennedy, C. (2018), Language and reading comprehension in middle childhood predicts emotional and behaviour difficulties in adolescence for those with permanent childhood hearing loss. *J. Child Psychol. Psychiatr.* 59:180-190. doi: 10.1111/jcpp.12803.

References:

¹Stevenson, J. et al. (2015), Emotional and behavioural difficulties in children and adolescents with hearing impairment: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Eur. Child Adolesc. Psychiatry.* 24, 477-496. doi: 10.1007/s00787-015-0697-1