

TREATMENT OUTCOMES OF A THREE-WEEK INTENSIVE STUTTERING MODIFICATION PROGRAM

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BACKGROUND

□The American Speech, Language, and Hearing Association states that the goal of evidence based practice is the integration of clinical expertise, client values, and best evidence (ASHA, 2008).

□There are numerous intensive stuttering therapy programs that treat adolescent and adults who stutter, yet best evidence for treatment outcomes remain relatively rare despite calls for the verification of treatment techniques and/or procedures (Blomgren, 2007; Conture, 1996; Onslow, 2003; Yaruss, 2001).

□Objective evaluation of the effectiveness of stuttering therapy programs is essential if our profession aims to move toward evidence based practice.

□There is little data regarding the effectiveness of stuttering modification therapy, and most of these studies are decades old and do not provide a multidimensional assessment of stuttering (Boudreau & Jeffrey, 1973; Dalali & Sheehan, 1974; Gregory, 1972; Irwin, 1972; Prins, 1970; Prins & Nichols, 1974).

□Despite the paucity of evidence, stuttering modification continues to be a popular with therapists and texts (Breitenfeldt & Lorenz, 1989; Conture, 2001; Gregory, 2003; Guitar, 1998; Manning, 1996; Shapiro, 1999).

□Any assessment of stuttering requires a multidimensional approach (Blomgren, 2007). This typically includes assessing both surface elements (stuttering frequency) as well as associated elements of stuttering such as communication attitudes, quality of life, etc.

□The Successful Stuttering Management Program (SSMP) is an example of a stuttering modification treatment program that is based on avoidance reduction therapy (Sheehan, 1970) and the techniques advocated by Van Riper (1973).

□The SSMP has many participants who have been treated successfully, and the current study is the beginning of an ongoing process of collecting and reporting short and long-term treatment outcomes.

□Specifically, the aim of this study is intended to assess changes in stuttering frequency and severity, communication attitudes, communication in daily situations, quality of life, and other factors following participation in the SSMP and whether these changes stabilized, improved, or worsened in the subsequent months and years.

METHOD

□Eight individuals who stutter participated in the SSMP at Eastern Washington University.

□Group and individual therapy was provided for 3.5 hours each weekday for a period of 3 weeks.

□Therapy was provided by graduate student clinicians who were supervised by three speech-language pathologists with expertise in stuttering.

□First phase of the program, which lasted approximately 2 weeks, consisted of identifying and analyzing the stuttering pattern and reducing fears and avoidances associated with stuttering.

□Second phase consisted of learning fluency enhancing and stuttering modification skills.

□A maintenance plan was the third and final phase of the therapy program.

□A series of fluency and affective measures were assessed before treatment, immediately after treatment, and 4 months after treatment. Measures included percentage of syllables stuttered; the Stuttering Severity Instrument for Children and Adults, Third Edition (SSI-3); Overall Assessment of the Speaker's Experience of Stuttering (OASES); Modified Erickson Scale of Communication Attitudes; and the Locus of Control of Behavior Scale.

□Each participant was audio and video recorded during an oral reading task and during a spontaneous monologue speaking task. This activity was completed immediately pre- and post-treatment in front of a large audience.

□Follow-up measures were obtained at 4-months post-treatment as a follow-up measure. Only 6 of 8 participants completed the follow-up measures.

RESULTS

□Results revealed significant differences (pre-tx vs. post-tx) for all measures except Locus of Control.

□In addition, pre-treatment and follow-up scores were analyzed for six of the eight participants, and significant results were obtained for percentage of syllables stuttered, Modified Erickson Scale of Communication Attitudes, and Quality of Life on the OASES.

DISCUSSION

□All participants of the SSMP reduced overt stuttering behaviors such as frequency and severity of stuttering. Of the six participants who completed the follow-up measures, five showed a continued decrease of percentage syllables stuttered.

□In general, therapy ameliorated covert features of stuttering, but some individuals showed slight regression. The reason for the slight regression is unclear, but may point to an ongoing need of structured therapy during the transition period for some individuals who stutter.

□This study represents only an initial step in objectively evaluating the SSMP. Participants will participate in a one-week refresher therapy program at twelve months post-treatment, and this will allow an opportunity for long-term outcome data.

RESULTS

