

Communication Skills of Children at Increased Likelihood of Language Impairment in Infancy and at School Age

Background

There is a large previous literature focusing on the development of communication skills in children who have autistic family members; however, less attention has been given to children who have family members with a history of language and/or literacy disorders. Previous research suggests that communication skills may be an area of difficulty for at least some children in this group, but more information on their skills is needed, to allow for early identification of children who may need intervention to support communication development. This early identification is an important part of preventing potential negative sequelae associated with communication difficulties.

Methods

Twenty-three infants at increased likelihood of language and/or literacy disorder were recruited at age 8-22 months, and 20 of the children were assessed again at the age of 6-8 years. Their results on a range of standard measures of language and communication skills are compared to a group of average likelihood children also recruited in infancy and followed up at early school age.

Results

Differences between increased likelihood and average likelihood children were limited in infancy, but typical associations between language and social communication measures were absent. In addition, although typical range language skills as measured by formal assessment were seen in the increased likelihood group at school age, parents reported greater levels of communication difficulties on questionnaires than for the average likelihood group. Difficulties with non-word repetition, which occur in DLD, were also seen.

Conclusion

The potential communication profiles of this group will be discussed, along with recommendations for clinical practice and future research, including the need to consider parental concerns as well as formal assessment information.

Keywords: Increased likelihood, language, communication, DLD