

N° 7461

GRID FOR ASSESSING THE COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF CHILDREN WITH COCHLEAR IMPLANTS (GACC): WHAT AND FOR WHAT?

Helena Alves¹

¹ Speech and Language Pathologist

Unidade Local de Saúde de Coimbra

Praceta Professor Mota Pinto

3004-561 Coimbra, Portugal

Email: 25347@ulscoimbra.min-saude.pt

Telemóvel: +351934870317

BACKGROUND: Despite the variety of studies on the acquisition and development of language in deaf children and the existing language assessment instruments, there is no instrument available to assess the communicative abilities of deaf children with cochlear implants. The aim of this study is to fill this gap and assess the communicative abilities of these children. To this end, an assessment grid - the Communication Skills Assessment Grid (GACC) - was constructed and validated for the Portuguese population aged between 4 and 10 years old. It showed good internal consistency (it obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of over 0.7), proving to be a reliable instrument. In addition to assessing construct validity, the content was validated by a panel of experts. The GACC obtained, in its entirety and in different parameters (Relevance, Clarity, Simplicity and Ambiguity of its questions), a content validity index of over 0.80, proving its construct validity in terms of content. It also obtained the maximum score for understanding the instructions, clarity of the questions and ease of recording the answers.

OBJECTIVE: Introducing the GACC, a tool for assessing the communication skills of children with cochlear implants.

PLACE OF APPLICATION: Health and education professionals accompanying children with cochlear implants.

DESIGN: Evaluation of the communication skills of children with cochlear implants, comparing the data with that of their peers with normal hearing, and taking into account the age at the time of cochlear implantation.

POPULATION: A total of 100 children with cochlear implants, implanted at ULS Coimbra, aged between 6 and 10 years old, were evaluated.

METHOD: The GACC responses of children with cochlear implantation were analyzed, comparing the data of implanted children before and after 24 months of age, and comparing the data with those of children with normal hearing.

RESULTS: The results of this study led to the conclusion that early cochlear implantation (before the critical period for language acquisition and development) facilitates language development at a significant rate, enabling children to have communication skills equal to or very similar to those of their peers with normal hearing, between the ages of six and eight. This added value does not occur when cochlear implantation takes place later, during or after the critical period for language acquisition and development.

CONCLUSIONS: This work provided data to support early cochlear implantation and had the additional relevance of having made it possible to provide an instrument for assessing children's communication skills, as well as obtaining information about the communication skills of children with cochlear implants.