

EFFECT OF THE PARENT FOCUSED APPROACH TO THE COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF CHILDREN WITH CLEFT PALATE

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Background: Cleft Lip and Palate form an established risk for communication problems. Today there is world-wide awareness of the paramount importance of prevention and early detection and intervention. Therefore we developed a programme for a Parent Focused Approach (PFA) aimed at preventing communication problems in children with Cleft Lip and Palate.

Method: The PFA for children with Cleft Lip and Palate is based on the basic PFA we developed 1999 for the 'Child and Family' service in Belgium. It contains the principles of the Hanen-Centre in Toronto, the principles of Ward, Girolametto, Monfort and Njiokiktjien. The PFA is applied in three specialised Cleft Teams: Brussels, Antwerp and Bruges and starts from the age of 6 months till the age of 30 months. We compare the communication skills of the research group (PFA programme) with those of the control group (no PFA programme). To measure the effectiveness of the programme, we use the N-CDIs (Zink & Lejaegere, 2002) and the EPVs (Cocquyt & Zink, 2010) and video analysis of parent – child interactions.

Results: Preliminary results show a better outcome for the research group, than for the control group: less speech problems, better language and pragmatic skills. To date, our findings suggest that improving the interaction style of the parents seems to be very important to improve the communication skills of the children.

Conclusion / take home message: Preliminary results show the importance of the further continuation of the ongoing longitudinal study with infants with Cleft Lip and Palate, to study the effectiveness and usefulness of the PFA with this clinical group.