

Childhood Dementia Project ECHO® Community of Practice

Summary of Session 2 The importance of speech and language in childhood dementia

Speech and language changes are often the first signs of many childhood dementia disorders, and reflect disease progression and response to treatments, like medication and gene therapy. Communication is also a key concern for caregivers and can greatly impact quality of life. This session provided an overview of the importance of speech and language in childhood dementia, and how speech pathologists can support children with dementia and their families.

Opening presentation

Lottie Morison, a speech pathologist and PhD candidate in the CRE Translational Centre for Speech Disorders at Murdoch Children's Research Institute and The University of Melbourne, presented research on CLN2 (Batten disease). The presentation highlighted the importance of early diagnosis and treatment and the role of speech and language interventions throughout disease progression. Lottie also described the features of dysarthria in CLN2. Please watch the recording on our website.

Case presentation

Kate Montgomery Speech Language Pathologist presented a de-identified case X with childhood dementia. Kate detailed her 12 year journey with X and emphasised the need for early intervention and strategies to maintain communication as the condition progressed. Kate reflected on the importance of flagging additional symptoms and referring on, the benefits of early diagnosis and applying the dementia lens.

Strategies/techniques Kate discussed included

- AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication)
- Reading Doctor App
- Partner training
- Familiarity e.g music

For more information on the Childhood Dementia Project Echo® Community of Practice, please visit:

www.childhooddementia.org/health-professionals/community-of-practice