Multidisciplinary Hearing and Communication Care for Improved Pediatric Outcomes

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Abstract: Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) are at risk for life-long limitations in speech and language development, learning, and ultimately professional attainment. Many DHH children do not receive adequate and timely treatment. They also require continuous support over the course of their childhood and are frequently lost to follow-up. Additionally, families have significant psychological needs and the standard clinical model does not allow time to address these issues. Our practice developed a unique multidisciplinary Hearing and Communication Clinic (HCC) to address these challenges.

In a synchronous clinic visit families meet with all DHH providers including pediatric otolaryngology, audiology, speech-language pathology, social work and a care coordinator.   All team members use a relationship-centered communication approach to counseling, education, and care coordination. Through shared-decision-making, families and the team decide on a comprehensive care plan which is then shared with external speech therapists and educators. The social worker provides individual therapy for family members and acts as a liaison between schools and the clinic. The clinic uses a standard protocol for ensuring regular follow-up and continued care including weekly team meetings to discuss patients, and a database of all our patients that is regularly reviewed. During COVID we were able to seamlessly convert our in-person clinic to a virtual platform that allows families who live many hours away to continue to access high-quality hearing care. Surveys of families have shown an exceptionally high level of satisfaction with this model of care and statistically exceeds the patient satisfaction with standard clinic visits.

Biography: Dr. Anna K. Meyer is a Professor in Pediatric Otolaryngology in the Department of Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery at UCSF. I attended medical school at UCSF, did my Otolaryngology residency at the University of Michigan, my fellowship in Pediatric Otolaryngology at the Children’s Memorial Hospital (now Lurie Children’s Hospital). I was awarded the Roger Boles, MD, Academy Chair in Otolaryngology Education for my extensive contributions to medical education at UCSF. I teach communication skill nationally and internationally as Faculty in the Academy of Communication in Healthcare. I serve as Medical Director of Patient Experience, UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital - San Francisco