Position Paper: Pediatric Habilitation Following Cochlear Implantation

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Statement of the Problem

- ACIA state champions reported caps placed by 3rd party payers on number of speech-language sessions after children receive CIs
- Caps were arbitrary
- Most common cap was 30 sessions per year
- Sometimes as few as 20 sessions per year
How do therapy caps fail children with CIs?

- In number of sessions
- By failing to meet the provision of adequate intensity of treatment
- Via gaps in service
- By creating risk of regression
- As a failure to individualize care
- In contradicting what is known about developmental windows, sensitive periods, neuroplasticity
Therapy Caps Working Group of ACIA Established

• Began work in summer, 2014
• Members:
  ~ Hannah Eskridge
  ~ Amy McConkey Robbins
  ~ Kathryn Wilson
  ~ Lindsey Zombek
• Task was to draft a document that defined recommended number of sp/lang sessions post-CI and justified that recommendation
Creating the Document

- Reviewed CI literature
- Lit review of other pediatrics developmental areas
- Analyzed papers to determine if relevant to our document
- Interfaced with professional groups
- Wrote drafts of document
- ACIA Board reviewed and edited twice with Board discussion
- Approved by Board in July, 2015
ACI Alliance Issues Pediatric Habilitation Position Paper

Background
American Cochlear Implant Alliance advocates for access to the continuum of cochlear implant care, which includes (re)habilitation needed for a child or an adult. Our State Champions assessed coverage of cochlear implantation under Affordable Care Act Marketplace plans. We found that CI was a covered service in nearly every plan we looked at. However, we had concerns relating to limitations on the number of therapy sessions allowed under such plans, which typically were limited to 30 sessions per year—regardless of the age of the patient. Such limits are often referred to as “therapy caps” and are increasingly common in private insurance plans.

Position Paper
The Board of Directors of ACI Alliance appointed a committee of therapeutic clinicians to develop a position paper on pediatric habilitation following cochlear implantation. The committee was encouraged to utilize an evidence-based approach and provide a document that would be helpful in documenting the need for appropriate habilitation post cochlear implantation. The attached Position Paper was authored by Hannah Eskridge, Amy McConkey Robbins, Kathryn Wilson, and Lindsay Zimbek and approved by the ACI Alliance Board of Directors. We are grateful to the committee for this significant contribution to our field. Position Paper: Pediatric Habilitation Following Cochlear Implantation.

“The Alliance brings together the people with the expertise to gather the resources to improve the education, collaboration and focus of our community.”

John K. Niparko, MD
Founding Chairman, Board of Directors, ACI Alliance
Evidence from 5 domains of knowledge

1. Habilitation frequency cited in CI literature (Clinical Outcomes Research domain)
2. Amount of time needed to close CA/LA gaps (Clinical Management Reports domain)
3. Cross-modal plasticity and sensitive periods of cortical dev. (Neuroplasticity Research)
4. Risks associated with gaps in service, including regression of skills (Habilitation Best Practices)
5. Quality of life shortfall and societal cost of deafness (Health Economics Research domain)
Recommended Habilitation

- 50 to 100 (1) hour speech/lanng habilitation sessions per year
- Provided by professional knowledgeable about communication skills of CI children
- Coordination of services critical
- Each child is unique; providers to make individual recommendations
- Some children require fewer habilitation sessions, others more
How Position Paper May be Used

- By healthcare providers seeking pre-approval or reimbursement
- By parents interacting with insurance
- By CI teams educating others about standards
- By Federal and State Marketplace
- By providing to National Assoc. of Insurance Commissioners
- By Office of Personnel Management
- Others?
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Career Center at CI2015 DC