

Training in Autism for Speech, Language, & Hearing Professionals

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Background

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental condition characterized by differences in social communication, repetitive behaviors, and sensory processing
- Audiologists and speech-language pathologists play a key role in supporting individuals with ASD
- Many individuals with ASD have co-occurring auditory and sensory needs
- Prior research has suggested that many professionals in these fields may feel underprepared to meet these complex needs of individuals with ASD
- There is now a growing emphasis on early intervention and interdisciplinary care

Rationale

- Limited research on how SLPs and audiologists perceive their training related to ASD
- We need to identify the gaps in academic, clinical and professional preparation
- Understanding perceptions can inform improvements in training programs
- Our goal: gain understanding of current training and enhance the quality of care for individuals with autism across settings
- Support development of targeted educational resources

Methods

- Design: Exploratory, cross sectional survey study
- Participants: Licensed audiologists and SLPs in New England
- Sampling: Snowball sampling via state professional organizations (AAA, ASHA affiliates)
- Data Collection: Anonymous online survey (Qualtrics), takes about 10 minutes to complete, includes screening and closed and open ended questions
- Estimated Sample Size: about 90-200 participants
- Analysis: Descriptive statistics using SPSS and Excel

Results

- Our survey study became a bit more like a case study
- Our participant supported concerns about the limited ASD training
- Reported feeling underprepared even with academic and clinical experience
- Indicated they preferred trainings that were presented as online modules or specialized reading materials

Results (Graphic)

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Discussion

- Our minimal results demonstrate that there are persistent gaps in training even with coursework/clinical work
- These professions have a need for more practical and applied ASD training
- Future/continued findings can help to inform graduate program curriculum improvements and continuing education opportunities for professionals
- Hope to improve clinician confidence and quality of care for individuals with ASD

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