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Parents/caregivers' views on early intervention services in audiology in Johannesburg.

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ABSTRACT

Early identification of hearing loss followed by a timely and effective intervention programme for children with hearing loss is necessary to minimise the negative effects of hearing loss on the development of cognition, psychosocial and verbal communication skills. Such early intervention programmes need to be multidisciplinary, technologically sound and most important, it should take cognisance of the specific context (community, country) in which the child and family function. The main aim of this study is to obtain accurate and reliable baseline information regarding current status of the early intervention process for children with hearing loss in Johannesburg, a Metropolitan City in a developing country. Self-administered questionnaires were handed out to obtain information from 19 hearing impaired childrens' parents regarding the ages of suspicion of hearing loss, diagnosis and commencement of aural habilitation. The nature of diagnosis and the management of these children are also described. The findings indicate that children in the study were diagnosed and began habilitation late (mean age 24 months and 36months respectively) and that the management process is fragmented. The strengths in the current identification and follow-up process namely, parental involvement and established early intervention service structure are highlighted. Parents' perceptions of the success and failures of the early intervention services were resolved.

Key words: childhood hearing loss, parents/caregivers views, age of diagnosis, age of intervention, developing country