It is critical that speech-language pathologists engage in evidence-based practice (EBP). According to ASHA (2005), EBP integrates: 1. clinical expertise/expert opinion, 2. external scientific evidence, and 3. the perspectives of clients/families to provide high-quality services that reflect their needs, values, interests, and choices. Resonating with this third aim of EBP, Black and Wells (2007) define cultural competence as an attitude and practice in which the treating professional is knowledgeable about and sensitive to their clients’ beliefs and values and works with them to develop appropriate and meaningful treatment plans.

Many individuals do not share information about their utilization of alternative practices and remedies with their health professionals (Wong & Smith, 2006), potentially due to concerns among professionals’ lack of acceptance and cultural mismatches. SLPs may sense a dilemma. It is critical that SLPs provide treatments that are evidence-based and avoid promoting practices that are not, yet they must also display cultural competence and sensitivity to the values and choices of their clients and families.

METHODS

Participants: Parents/guardian participants were recruited via email and online community and parent groups. SLPs were recruited via email, ASHA Special Interest Groups, Multicultural Constituency groups, and online professional networks throughout the United States. Respondents included 105 parents/guardians of children with special needs in 24 U.S. states and 115 SLPs who serve children ages 3-18 in 29 states.

RESULTS

1. I am comfortable disclosing my use of any methods indicated alone with SLP.
   - Strongly согласиться 14.29%
   - Agree 29.20%
   - Disagree 28.68%
   - Strongly disagree 37.73%

2. SLP demonstrates openness of use of any methods indicated alone to treat my child.
   - Strongly согласиться 1.49%
   - Agree 4.93%
   - Disagree 7.26%
   - Strongly disagree 86.32%

3. I believe there are benefits of using the indicated methods to treat my child’s speech, language, hearing needs.
   - Strongly согласиться 1.49%
   - Agree 4.93%
   - Disagree 7.26%
   - Strongly disagree 86.32%

4. I feel that I have sufficient knowledge about the use of complementary/alternative medicine and practices across cultures.
   - Strongly согласиться 14.29%
   - Agree 29.20%
   - Disagree 28.68%
   - Strongly disagree 37.73%

5. Most clients/families that I serve who use CAM have disclosed this information with me.
   - Strongly согласиться 14.29%
   - Agree 29.20%
   - Disagree 28.68%
   - Strongly disagree 37.73%

6. I believe that most clients/families that I serve who use CAM have felt comfortable disclosing the practice despite the professional’s lack of medical knowledge.
   - Strongly согласиться 14.29%
   - Agree 29.20%
   - Disagree 28.68%
   - Strongly disagree 37.73%

7. I believe that I am able to comfortably discussing this topic with clients/families.
   - Strongly согласиться 1.49%
   - Agree 4.93%
   - Disagree 7.26%
   - Strongly disagree 86.32%

8. I demonstrate acceptance of clients/families’ use of CAM to treat illness and disabilities.
   - Strongly согласиться 1.49%
   - Agree 4.93%
   - Disagree 7.26%
   - Strongly disagree 86.32%

9. The use of CAM has negatively impacted clients/families’ implementation of my clinical recommendations.
   - Strongly согласиться 1.49%
   - Agree 4.93%
   - Disagree 7.26%
   - Strongly disagree 86.32%

10. I believe there are benefits of using CAM along with speech-language therapy to treat speech/language hearing needs.
    - Strongly согласиться 1.90%
    - Agree 7.62%
    - Disagree 32.19%
    - Strongly disagree 65.72%

Where have you received information/training about how culture influences clients’ beliefs, values, and practices for treating illness and disabilities? (Check all that apply)

- Online discussions/listservs
- Books
- Journal articles
- Professional development
- Colleagues
- Faculty mentor

What would you like professionals to know about your family’s culture, including your values, beliefs and practices, that would help them more effectively serve you and your child?

- It’s important to know that it’s not just...this is how we...we would appreciate if you could...it’s a challenge...not as much...it’s...it’s really helpful...it’s...it’s important...

Where do you seek information or training about culture?

- Online websites
- Books
- Journal articles
- Professional development
- Colleagues

DISCUSSION

More than half (58%) of parents reported using complementary and alternative methods to treat their child’s disorder; in addition, 11% reported that physicians, 13% reported that SLPs, and 7% reported that other professionals have recommended CAM methods. Of SLP respondents, approximately one-third reported that their clients/families use CAM to address their child’s special needs prior to pursuing SLP services; additionally, 21% reported having recommended CAM to families, and 75% reported having used CAM personally. The majority of SLP respondents reported rarely or never discussing the use of alternative methods with parents/guardians. Overall, these research findings highlight the importance of continued investigation of the effectiveness of these methods, sensitivity to clients’ and families’ values and choices, increased education, and open communication between SLPs and the clients/families they serve.

REFERENCES


SLP Responses (cont.)

Please provide any additional comments or recommendations for SLP training/education about this topic.

- "If I don’t believe or practice these methods, it is still very important to understand that some families pursue these-whether they are culturally-based or because they are looking for something more to help their loved one."
- "I do not recommend alternative methods but rather inform them about what is out there, what others have used and what I have used."
- "Some alternative practitioners convince people that their treatments alleviate symptoms despite the lack of evidence."
- "It would be nice to have a continuing education opportunity that explains different views and evidence there is to support their use alongside SLP treatment."
- "I think traditional medical/theory therapy mixes well with other therapies but it is not one in and of itself."
- "I feel that I can truly help people if I am administering more treatments that I am with the limitations of doing only what insurance will pay for. Eventually, to feel like I can truly help people I am being forced into private practice where I can administer more treatments."
- "We have to be aware of research that is outside of our comfort zone, and we have to avoid any biases in our clinical decision making."


Georgia Petersen, B.A., Elmhurst College

Faculty Mentor: Brenda Gorman

BACKGROUND

It is critical that speech-language pathologists engage in evidence-based practice (EBP). According to ASHA (2005), EBP integrates: 1. clinical expertise/expert opinion, 2. external scientific evidence, and 3. the perspectives of clients/families to provide high-quality services that reflect their needs, values, interests, and choices.