**Audiology Clinician Perspectives on Decision-Making for the Management of Otitis Media with Effusion: A Thematic Analysis**

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**BACKGROUND**

Otitis media with effusion (OME) is a common cause of childhood hearing loss that can cause problems with speech, language and educational development1. The different options for management of OME creates uncertainties for parents and clinicians to consider. This should be managed through a process of shared decision making (SDM), which has had low uptake in other healthcare settings2,3,4. There is lacking evidence on the clinician perspectives on the current use of SDM in OME management.

**AIMS**

To gain an understanding of audiology clinicians perspectives on:
- their role in the decision-making process
- Shared decision making for OME management
- A need for improvement

**METHODS**

**RECRUITMENT**
Eight audiology clinicians were recruited to participate

**DATA COLLECTION**
Semi-structured one-to-one interviews carried out with participants

**DATA ANALYSIS**
Interviews were transcribed and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis5

**FINDINGS**

**The Need for Prior Understanding**

'But that’s where I find that speech banana helps or doing speech testing helps because they understand speech, they don’t understand warble tones' (Mary, page 12).

**Preconceived Ideas on Management Options**

'A lot of the time it’s do they want surgery yes or no, and a lot of the time parents just kind of know how they feel about that' (Esther, page 12).

**Execution of Shared Decision-Making is Varied**

Audiology clinician views on parental role and involvement

- The Need for Empowerment
  'So I think they’re just kind of waiting for us to tell them what to do rather than being aware that they’ve got a decision to make' (Catherine, page 3).

- Uncertainty over Provision of Recommendations
  'I think it might be different if we had the freedom to say, actually this is what I recommend, but we’re not allowed to say that so the parents don’t take us as seriously.' (Esther, page 7).

Audiology clinician views on professional remit

- Professional Hierarchy
  'I think probably the lack of power that I personally as an audiologist feel, I think that contributes to it. Now I think ultimately we are not doctors and that’s what prevents it' (Esther, page 8).

Availability of Resources

'So maybe some sort of Table or decision tree for them to look at while we’re having that discussion might be a way for them to step it forward' (Louise, page 15).

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

Audiology clinicians value the role of SDM within their practice and OME management. However, execution of SDM in practice is varied, which is similar to findings from other healthcare settings4,5. Studies have shown that clinicians’ understanding of SDM can vary relating to the clinician’s views of their role in decision-making6. As well as being influenced by systematic factors, this leads to variation of SDM in practice6,7.

**REFERENCES**