Emotional Reactivity and Treatment Outcomes in Pre-school Age Children Who Stutter

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Abstract:
The purpose of this study is to determine if emotional reactivity (ER), or sympathetic autonomic arousal, predicts treatment time in preschool age children who stutter (CWS). Pre-treatment ER will be quantified in 16 CWS (ages 3:0-5:11) by (a) skin conductance levels in two non-speech and speech stressor tasks (b) a validated parent report questionnaire with an ER subscale (Behavioral Style Questionnaire). The Lidcombe Program (LP) will be used as the behavioral intervention to determine treatment time in number of weeks. Speech-language variables will also be included as covariates to prevent the misattribution of variance to group differences in ER. It is hypothesized that CWS with higher pre-treatment ER will take longer to achieve fluency in therapy and will be at higher risk of relapse long term. We propose that ER, which is not directly addressed in LP treatment, is associated with childhood stuttering. The results of this study can be expected to shed critical light on maintaining factors in childhood stuttering and motivate experimental changes in treatment protocol for those children who take longer or do not do as well in treatment.