

Evaluation of telematic services for guiding parents of preschool CWS.

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Introduction

An online information and guidance service has been developed for parents of preschool children who begin to stutter. This service is part of a broader online therapy provision scheme, provided by KEOT. Online services have been built on an integrated web application system developed on the JEE platform¹ using standardised Web 2.0 technologies². The service under consideration is provided free of charge to families who live in the rural areas of Greece and have limited access to specialized speech therapy provision. Parents are informed about the service and gain access through the centre's web site www.travlisimos.gr. Parents login to a personal account where their data is uploaded and securely stored. Following a step-by-step procedure they upload information regarding their child, replying to specifically designed questionnaires. At the end of the procedure a specialized speech and language therapist contacts them via skype or by telephone in order to discuss all the uploaded information and to give verbal and written advice. Written advice has the form of pre-made as well as tailored information, which is specified for each client. Information gathered relates to the onset and development of stuttering, language, psychomotor and emotional development of the child, medical history, family relationships, routines and patterns of communication. We use a multifactorial framework³ to the onset of stuttering in order to evaluate the relevant information, to build a 'vulnerability profile'⁴ for every child and to offer guidance and advice. For a period of 9 months (March to November 2009) we received 79 requests for giving access to the service. Less than half of the families who applied for the service (35/79) completed the procedure.

Method

In order to evaluate the service a specifically designed questionnaire has been developed. There are four areas of examination in the questionnaire: a) evaluation of the process b) evaluation of the service in terms of fulfilling parental needs and expectations c) reasons for staying in or opting out d) actions taken as a response to the service. A 5 point scale has been used for rating in areas (a) and (b). Multiple choice question have been used to examine areas (c) and (d) (not presented due to space restrictions - available on request). All 79 clients were notified by means of e-mail for the evaluation process and were given a link to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was cited as response form in KEOT's web page to preserve anonymity.

1. JEE (Java Enterprise Edition) <http://jee.sun.com/jee/> 2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_2.0 3. Smith, A., & Kelly, E. (1997). Stuttering: A multifactorial dynamic model. In R.F. Curlee & G.M. Siegel (Eds.), *Nature and treatment of stuttering*. New directions (pp.204-217). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Starweather, C.W., & Grotzwil, S.R. (1990). The demands and capabilities model II: a clinical application. *Journal of Fluency Disorders*, 15, 143-157. Rustin, L., Cook, F., Babbitt, W., Hughes, C., & Kehmyr, E. (2001). *Stuttering: A practical guide for teachers and other professionals*. London: David Fulton. 4. Kemerzi, A. & Nifliou, A. (2008) *Practical intervention for early Childhood Stammering*. Milton Keynes: Speechmark Publishing Ltd.

Results

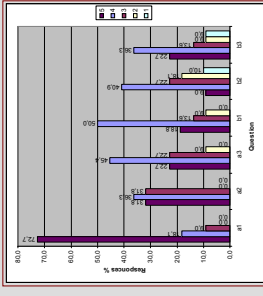
We received 22 responses. The service was given an overall mean mark 3.73 in the scale 1 to 5. The results for each item are shown in Table 1.

- In terms of the qualitative analysis the main findings are:
- 50,0% of the parents who completed the questionnaire had no concern to upload personal information in the internet. Even parents who had some concern (22,7%) or were very reluctant (18,1%), completed the process.
 - The reason for following the processes to the end was that they needed specialized information (31,8%) and that they trusted KEOT as a specialized centre (27,2%).
 - The reason for opting out was that the process was not anonymous for the 81.8% of the service users.
 - 36,3% of the parents followed most of the advice given and 27,2% referred themselves to the nearest therapist for an evaluation.

Discussion

- Less than half of those who applied to the service actually made use of it. In addition to the percentage of those who completed the process with some concern (22,7%) or being very reluctant (18,1%), this fact may imply that many parents do not fully trust the online procedure.
- The demand for anonymity may be an indication of current attitudes in the Greek society towards fluency disorders. The founding of a stuttering association may be helpful in promoting changes in attitudes and believes.
- As a result of this investigation we are in the process of restructuring the service. Alterations will be made in the steps and the questionnaires and more material will be added in the provided resources. A clearer statement of confidentiality will be given to increase trust.
- 18,8% and 50% of the parents rated the overall process extremely useful and very useful, respectively. This level of satisfaction implies that the service fulfilled, to a considerable extent, the demands for many of those who have made use of it.

Table 1. Responses in % for each rating (1 to 5) for each question.



1. How quick was KEOT response to your request to have access to the service?
2. How intelligible were the guidelines given for logging in and for following the steps of the service?
3. Evaluate how easy was the process to complete.
4. Evaluate and give an overall mark to the service.
5. To what extent the information and guidance you received fulfilled your expectations and answered your questions about your child?
6. To what extend have you followed the given advice?

The centre

Stuttering Research and therapy Centre (KEOT) is a specialized, private, speech and language centre, located in Athens, Greece. KEOT offers intensive group therapy courses for adults and adolescents who stutter, encourages self support groups for AWS, provides individual and group therapy courses for school age children, early intervention programs for preschool children and parental support groups.

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