

Communication is Key

Are parents happy with the way a diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy is announced?

childhood
disability
LINK



Summary

Good communication is a key part of healthcare. In this study, researchers were interested in understanding whether parents were satisfied with the way a diagnosis of cerebral palsy was communicated to them, and what factors were related to that satisfaction. They asked caregivers to complete a questionnaire. Information about the child, the family and the social environment were also documented. The researchers found that, overall, caregivers were satisfied with the disclosure process (how the diagnosis was communicated)—especially when the professional providing the diagnosis was direct, honest and approachable. They also reported that when the content of the information was clear, and sufficient time was given for questions, then the process was less stressful. Higher caregiver stress was found to be related to severity of the child’s cerebral palsy.

What families should know

This study found that overall, caregivers were happy with how professionals communicated with them. When discussing a diagnosis with a health care professional, don’t be afraid to ask questions and to let them know when information is unclear.

What clinicians should know

Improving the level of satisfaction with the disclosure process may improve the caregiver’s adaptation to having a child with a disability and may result in decreased levels of caregiver stress. Medical factors alone do not predict caregiver stress in a child with a significant motor impairment.

Reference

[Dagenais, L., Hall, N., Majnemer, A., Birnbaum, R., Dumas, F., Gosselin, J., Koclas, L., & Shevell, M.I. \(2006\). Communicating a diagnosis of cerebral palsy: Caregiver satisfaction and stress. *Pediatric Neurology*, 35, 408-414.](#)