

Exploring Audiologists' Perspectives on Managing Patients with Suspected Auditory Processing Disorder: A Service Evaluation

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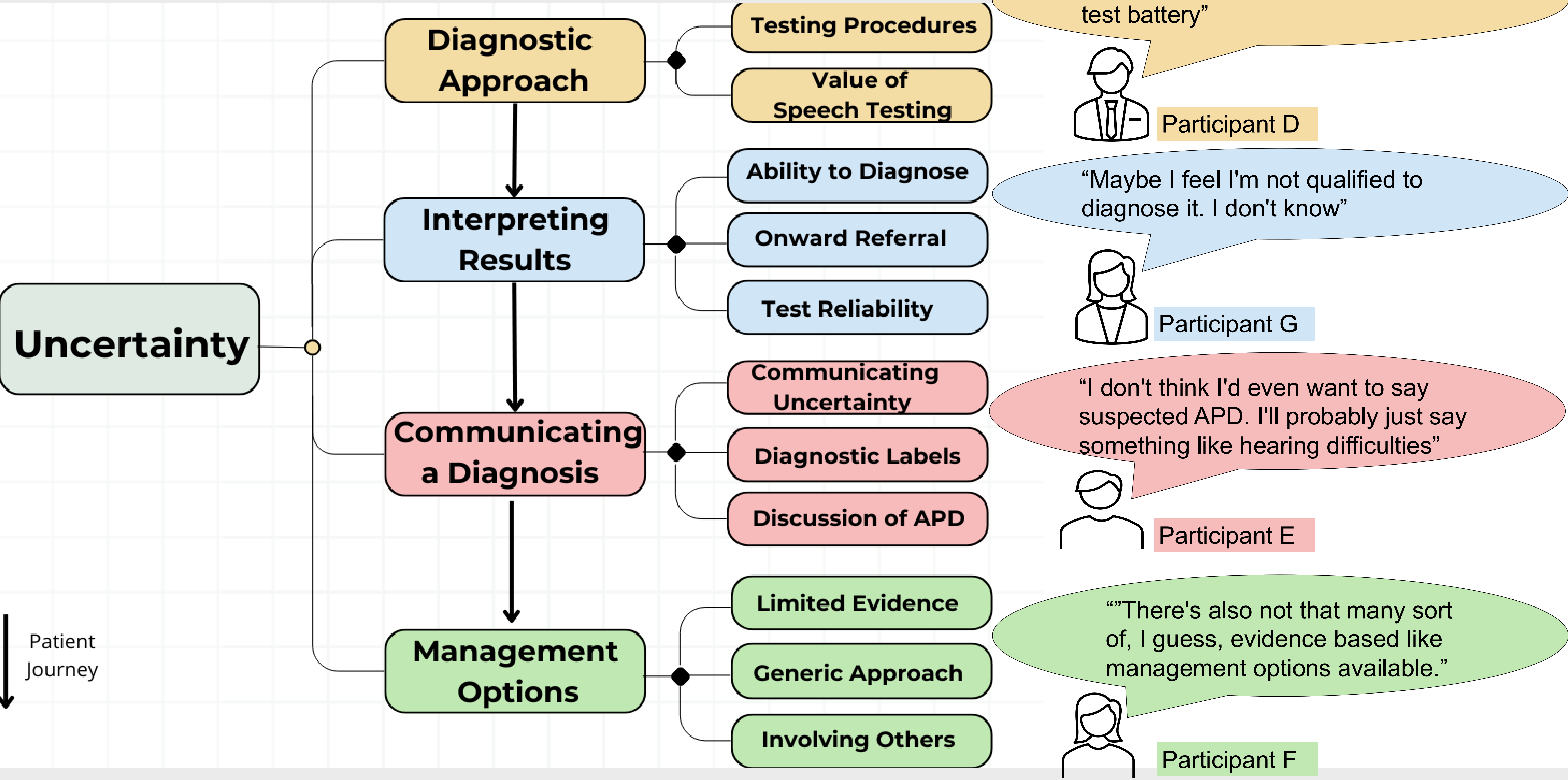
1. Background

- Auditory processing disorder (APD) refers to difficulty processing acoustic stimuli, including speech or non-speech sounds [1].
- A recent national survey has shown that a low percentage of audiologists currently screen for, diagnose, and manage APD [2].
- While some NHS trusts offer a specific pathway for APD, most audiology departments, including at Great Western Hospital (GWH), do not.
- Nationally, patients with APD have highlighted the significant challenges they face in getting a diagnosis and appropriate support [3].
- Patients presenting with suspected APD at Great Western Hospital are often discharged without any further investigation, referral, or management.
- **Aim:** To explore audiologists' perspectives on managing suspected APD.

2. Methods

- **Design:** Qualitative service evaluation.
- **Participants :** Seven audiologists (six females, one male) with varied roles, training routes, years of experience, and specialisms.
- **Data Collection:** Semi-structured interviews asking questions about their understanding, experiences, and views on APD.
- **Data analysis:** A variant of reflexive thematic analysis.

3. Results



4. Conclusions

- Key Findings:**
- The evaluation identified uncertainty throughout the journey of a patient with suspected APD within the audiology department at GWH.
 - The lack of a gold-standard diagnostic test and limited guidance on APD created significant variability in clinical practice.
 - This affects audiologists' confidence and ability to deliver consistent, evidence-based care.
 - Limited multidisciplinary collaboration and unclear referral pathways were potential barriers to providing appropriate patient-centred care.
- Implications:**
- The department could improve the service provided for patients with suspected APD by addressing the sources of uncertainty.
 - This could include providing standardised protocols, targeted training and improved multidisciplinary working.
- Future Directions:**
- The evaluation also raised a novel and vital question of how clinicians can be better supported to manage uncertainty in practice.
 - Further exploration of this issue could offer valuable insight for improving care in other complex or poorly defined areas of clinical practice.

References

1. British Society of Audiology (2018) 'Position Statement and Practice Guidance Auditory Processing Disorder (APD)' pp. 1–19.

2. Bernard, M. W., Koohi, N. and Bamiou, D. E. (2024) 'Auditory processing disorder: an online survey of hearing healthcare professionals' knowledge and practices', *International Journal of Audiology*. pp. 1–10.

3. Agrawal, D. *et al.* (2021) 'Experiences of Patients With Auditory Processing Disorder in Getting Support in Health, Education, and Work Settings: Findings From an Online Survey', 12.