A 6-year Retrospective Review of 121 Paediatric Patients seen in a Tertiary Referral Voice Clinic

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Background

Paediatric voice disorders are common yet can be challenging to diagnose and manage. The early diagnosis and correct management of such dysphonia is important for educational, social and psychological development. There are very little data on the prevalence and aetiology of paediatric voice pathology. We present the largest series of paediatric dysphonia patients presenting to a voice clinic in the UK.

Method

Lewisham Voice Clinic is one of the largest in the country with 2 consultant laryngologists, 2 specialist speech therapists, 3 laryngeal osteopaths, and a remedial vocal coach.

To our knowledge the voice clinic boasts the largest database of voice disorders in the country with almost 5000 sequential patient visits logged. The database is collected contemporaneously with the out-patient appointment and has done so since the end of 2010.

We undertook a retrospective study of all paediatric patients aged between 0 and 16 over a 6 year period from January 2011 to March 2017. Data reviewed included patient demographics, investigations, diagnoses, management decisions and subjective questionnaire scores. The patient centred diagnoses, management decisions and subjective questionnaire scores. The patient centred index and the paediatric reflux symptom index.

[we did not include patients aged between 16 and 18 as they were included in the adolescents review - also presented at this meeting]

Results

• 121 new paediatric patients were seen over a total of 214 consultations. 72 (60%) were male, 49 (40%) female.
• Age range 3-15 years with mean age 10.
• Rigid or flexible endoscopic examination of the vocal folds was possible in 113 (93%) patients.
• Diagnoses were listed according to the McGlashan protocol (2006) into primary, secondary and tertiary aetiologies.
• Vocal fold cysts (23%), muscle tension dysphonia (17%) and vocal fold nodules (13%) were the commonest diagnoses.
• Surgery was performed in 18%.
• 46% were referred for speech and language therapy.
• The case series included 19 ‘professional’ singers ranging from, school choir, to TV, to Chorister. A more detailed analysis of this group is also presented at this meeting.

Paediatric voice disorders can be managed in a district general hospital with appropriate surgical and speech and language expertise in a multidisciplinary team. Our experience suggests that vocal fold cysts are more common than nodules in paediatric patients presenting to the voice clinic.

Conclusion

Paediatric voice disorders can be managed in a district general hospital with appropriate surgical and speech and language expertise in a multidisciplinary team. Our experience suggests that vocal fold cysts are more common than nodules in paediatric patients presenting to the voice clinic.