

“I feel sorry for this person” – Attitudes of naïve listeners towards adults with dysarthria in cerebral palsy

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It has been suggested that communication abilities contribute crucially to social participation in patients with cerebral palsy (CP). This study aimed to investigate the impact of dysarthria on the attitudes of naïve listeners towards adults with CP.

Speech samples of 18 adult patients with CP and of six healthy controls were presented to 20 naïve listeners. A questionnaire was developed which covered the dimensions (1) attribution of cognitive / language abilities, (2) estimation of personality and (3) listeners' emotional affection / behavioral tendencies. The patients' dysarthria was assessed using the *Bogenhausen Dysarthria-Scales*.

Attitudes towards the patients differed from those towards the controls in all dimensions. The listeners attributed low cognitive abilities and less positive personality characteristics to the patients, pity and avoiding behavior dominated their emotional affection and behavioral tendencies. The overall attitudes were highly correlated with the severity of dysarthria. Certain dysarthric features had a particularly adverse impact on the attitudes towards the patients.

The results show that adult patients with CP are being prejudged due to dysarthria. Consequences of dysarthria on social participation have to be focused on in assessment and intervention.