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The present thesis addresses young adults with Alström syndrome (AS). AS causes an acquired severe, progressive, combined auditory and visual impairment affecting daily life and self-reliance to a degree that full participation depends on help from others and society. AS has a multi-systemic pathology including a high incidence of additional multiple endocrine abnormalities, cardiomyopathy, pulmonary fibrosis, restrictive lung disease and progressive hepatic and renal failure, leading to a reduced life expectancy. Also individuals with Usher syndrome type 2 (USH2) are included in some studies. They differ from individuals with AS regarding onset and degree of sensory loss (e.g. by a slower progression of visual loss), enabling a study of the consequence of sensory loss. Individuals with USH2 have in contrast to AS no additional abnormalities. The focus in the present thesis is the development of Theory-of-mind (ToM) and on how ToM relates to communicative prerequisites, the development of certain cognitive skills and the characteristics of the individual social network. ToM refers to the ability to understand the thoughts and feelings of others. The results revealed a high degree of heterogeneity in ToM performance. The group of individuals with AS was outperformed by both the nondisabled control group and the group of individuals with USH. Some individuals with AS, however, performed at an equal level with individuals with USH and nondisabled individuals. ToM performance was predicted by verbal ability and executive functions (EFs). Later onset of visual loss further characterized AS individuals with better ToM. The sizes of the social networks of individuals with AS were smaller relative to those of nondisabled individuals, and as a secondary consequence of the multi systemic pathology, many of the acquaintances were professionals working with individuals with AS. The number of friends correlated with ToM performance. The present thesis discusses methods to improve verbal ability and EFs. Interventions to enhance social participation in childhood of individuals with AS might further prove to be fruitful, in addition to assistive technology, to establish and maintain friendships in adulthood.

ISSN 1650-1128

ISBN 978-91-7529-132-1



HANS-ERIK FRÖLANDER Deafblindness

2016

Doctoral Dissertation

Deafblindness

Theory-of-mind, cognitive functioning and social network in Alström syndrome

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Disability Science



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Studies from The Swedish Institute for Disability Research 78