

THE INTERDISCIPLINARY ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT OF LEARNING DISABILITIES: A TEAM'S USE OF NEURODEVELOPMENTAL MODELS AND EMPIRICAL METHODS TO PRODUCE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES

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The sensorimotor and cognitive deficits in children with learning disabilities can be effectively assessed and treated by an interdisciplinary team. The first step of treatment is assessment, which if properly performed can provide an understanding of pathophysiology and lead to rational treatment approaches. In this course, Dr. Conway will first provide an overview of theoretical models of language (Alexander, 2006; Paivio, 2007) and sensorimotor development (Williams and Shellenberg, 1996). He will also discuss how modular and integrative dysfunction may induce learning disorders. Subsequently, to illustrate an interdisciplinary team's approach to assessment and treatment, as well as the outcomes, each speaker will present interdisciplinary data on a child with a learning disability and co-morbid disorders. Dr. Bruney will discuss how a neurodevelopmental evaluation provides essential medical and developmental data. Some of the most common and disabling disorders are speech-language deficits (reading, spelling, writing, comprehension, and language). The assessment and treatment of these disorders will be discussed by Ms. Fretheim. Dr. Richards will discuss the sensorimotor disorders that often co-occur with learning disorders. Dr. Warner will discuss the assessment and treatment of behavioral, executive functioning, working memory and attention disorders, as well as the "glue" that neuropsychology contributes to an interdisciplinary team. Finally, Dr. Heilman will provide a critique and summary of this symposium, as well as suggestions for future research. As a result of participation in this session, the learner will: 1) be able to identify the advantages of an interdisciplinary team approach to evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of children with sensorimotor deficits and learning disabilities; 2) learn that a patient's evaluation, together with an understanding of pathophysiology, are often the best means of guiding the forms of treatment; and 3) learn how an interdisciplinary team evaluates pre- and post-treatment data to assess treatment efficacy.