

Update from the cognition network, the spring 2017

The cognition-network, established in 2008, runs a project on assessment of cognition related to Congenital deafblindness (Cdb). The network is connected to the Nordic Welfare Center (NVC). The aim of the project is to develop professional competence, and to expand the knowledge about cognitive development in this population.

The network has 20 members from the practical field of deafblindness, whereof 10 are actively participating at meetings. Some members are affiliated to universities, conducting research about deafblindness. All the Nordic countries, except Iceland, are for the moment represented. In addition, individuals from Kentalis, in the Netherlands, take part. At a meeting this year in Oslo professionals from Sense, a national charity supporting people with deafblindness in the United Kingdom, also participated.

During the years, 13 meetings have been conducted, many of them at the previous site in Dronninglund. Lately we have conducted meetings also in the Stockholm area and in Copenhagen. We have presented our project at both NVC – conferences and Deafblind International (DbI) – conferences. In the fall 2013, in Dronninglund, we presented guidelines for assessment of cognition in deafblindness at a course for professionals within the field. We published the guidelines in 2014. Two years ago in Sigtuna, we conducted a course on the topic for professionals. This course also attracted professionals involved in assessment of other disabled populations. We organized an additional course in Helsinki in June last year, for professionals who provide service to individuals with Cdb. The topic was video-analysis as a tool for assessment of cognition.

We intend to contribute at the European DbI conference EUK 2017 in Ålborg, by presentations at the preconference during the Nordic day. Members of our network will in addition conduct workshops at the main-conference and make short presentations at the scientific symposium. We further aim to develop the connection to relevant University departments. Several members already have such connections, and three thesis's connected to the addressed topic of deafblindness have recently been completed by members of our network. During the previous meeting in Oslo, we began developing semi-structured methods to observe and assess cognition in relation to individuals with Cdb. In connection to the meeting. Dr Saskia Damen and Dr Flemming Ask Larsen from our network lectured about video-analyses as a tool for assessment of cognition in individuals with Cdb. The lecture, followed by listeners from all the Nordic countries, was organized by NVC in cooperation with the Norwegian Nasjonal Kompetensetjeneste för dövblindfödda (NKDB) and the Norwegian Statped. The later also streamed the lecture that reached in total 94 persons.

The goal for our network, over the next two years, is to continue developing methods, for assessment of cognitive abilities in individuals with Cdb. In addition, we would like to convey knowledge to other professionals from closely related areas, and to develop the exchange with other networks. We have, accordingly, during the last three meetings organized an exchange with the tactile NVC network. We plan to organize our next meeting in Stockholm in June this year, beginning to develop “guidelines for semi-structured observations of cognitive ability in individuals with Cdb.

On behalf of our network, I would like to express gratitude for all support NVC has given, specifically addressing the coordinator Maria Creutz. We hope for continuing cooperation.

2017-03-23
Hans-Erik Frölander
PhD

Psychologist at the Swedish Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (SPSM),
Coordinator of the NVC cognition network