

Workshop: Assessment of cognition in children and adults with severe speech and motor impairments

Presenter: Kristine Stadskeiv, Associate professor/Neuropsychologist, University of Oslo, Department of Special Needs Education & Oslo University Hospital, Department of Clinical Neurosciences for Children.

Website: <https://www.uv.uio.no/isp/personer/vit/krisstad/>

Short bio:

Kristine Stadskeiv has a focus upon cognitive functioning in children and adults with congenital and acquired brain injuries in her research, in particular involving diagnostic groups like cerebral palsy (CP) and paediatric brain tumours, and including individuals with the most severe speech and motor impairments. She also has a special clinical and research interest in the field of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). She has been involved in the development of a systematic follow-up protocol of cognition in children with CP, the *CPCog*, and led the work developing a similar protocol for adults.

Abstract:

Individuals with severe speech and motor impairments are often described as “non-assessable”. In studies of cognitive functioning their IQ is often assumed, not assessed. Despite the lack of assessment, their cognitive impairments are perceived as substantial. Although there is a correlation between degree of motor and cognitive impairments in many groups, drawing conclusions about cognitive function on this basis is inaccurate. On a group level, this may lead to inflated estimates of intellectual disability, whilst for the individual the consequences may be lack of appropriate interventions, limiting their possibility for autonomous communication and learning.

There are suitable methods of assessment available to neuropsychologists, which makes the view of children and adults with severe speech and motor impairments as non-assessable particularly unfortunate. These methods are applicable to individuals who may be able to voluntarily control only very limited motor movements, such as their eye-gaze or small head movements.

This workshop will focus on how assessment of cognitive functioning may be reliably performed in children and adults with severe speech and motor impairments. Quadriplegic and dyskinetic cerebral palsy, severe acquired brain injuries, severe neuromuscular disorders and progressive disorders are examples of diagnostic groups for which this is applicable. In the workshop, a framework for how response modality may be reliably adapted will be presented, along with video-examples illustrating the process. Research on adapted response modality, presentation of computer tools for assessment and relevant psychological tests, as well as a discussion about challenges and ethical dilemmas will be included.

After the workshop, the participants will have:

- Increased knowledge about cognitive functioning in children and adults with severe speech and motor impairments

- Increased knowledge about how assessments of cognition may be carried out when individuals have no speech and very severe motor impairments.
- Received practical tips about how to carry out adapted assessments