

Proposal for Workshop on Augmentative Alternative Communication (Hands-on and Make-n- Take Session)

Abstract:

Children and Adults with different conditions and disorders face temporary or permanent inability to speak or communicate conventionally. Our country's professional practice of Augmentative Alternative Communication is available in some premier institutes and very few clinics and hospitals. It's not readily open to all, and the non-acceptance of Alternative Communication by family members, especially parents, is perceived to hinder the implication and application. Besides, the cost of high-tech devices and availability to the general public is another factor.

It's not unknown that Alternative Communication is essential and should be encouraged to support present skills, to enhance or repair verbal skills. Awareness of various low-tech systems and the availability of cost-effective high-tech systems will motivate family members to opt. It will enable professionals to customize for each client and train and counsel their family members to use AAC systems.

This workshop is aimed at training professionals and parents about the efficacy of different AAC systems, customization of AAC systems, generalizing and easy implementing in various situations or places.

Audience- Beginners and Intermediate

Prerequisites –

Knowledge of factors affecting Speech and Language development or use like sensory skills, motor skills, cognitive skills, Stimulating Environments and Opportunity to communicate.

Introduction- Communication, being the observable socio-cognitive function, separates humans from other living beings. Communication is meant to serve as the bridge between an individual and people surrounding him, as it helps expressing thoughts, emotions, ideas, needs and experiences. It is the super set that contains the rule governed language, which further contains the sub set speech, which is the audible manifestation of language. Communication by any means should be prioritised as and when the conventional Speech mechanism or language process is compromised. Therefore, the cognitive processing is still in action, keeping the mental health of an individual intact.

When the Diagnosis and Intervention is delayed missing the critical age period, it becomes more difficult to help children acquire Speech and Language skills, therefore, more symbol based concepts are easier to be built upon.

In case of compromised processes in acquired disability, symbol based systems are one step ahead, being directly related to the concepts and easily representable and comprehensible, whereas impaired speech might be unintelligible to both trained and untrained ears.

Speech Language Pathologists work in collaboration with other professionals and parents to enable individuals with different speech and language disorders to communicate effectively.

Due to unmatched and unrealistic goals in improving Speech Production skills, the drop out rate and irregular follow up of patients makes it more difficult to give better outputs.

Augmentative Alternative Communication is an approach which are wrongly perceived as last resort by many parents, actually helps in rebuilding the communication chain and encourages individuals to be more verbal, as evidenced by many researches.

Augmentative Alternative Communication systems ranges from no-cost, low cost to cost-effective high tech systems, which are useful for many individuals with different types of disorders, affecting the pre-requisites of Speech and Language use.

Choosing a specific AAC system for an individual is a process involving assessment of pre-requisites and other factors like socio-economic status, literacy skills etc.

Customizing an AAC system for an individual is the next step that includes customizing in general way for easy accessibility as well as specific to different activities, situations and places.

Understanding and explaining need for AAC system, process of choosing one system over other, implementing it by training individuals and their communication partners, generalizing it in various situations and customizing time to time are various aspects are different steps that one has to excel to advocate use of AAC systems.

The present workshop will cover many aspects of AAC systems, giving an opportunity to try out, interact, examine knowledge and understanding.

Workshop Flow-

1. Theoretical Knowledge of types and classification of AAC systems with examples. (Half an hour)
2. Types of Disorders with case studies needing AAC systems (Half an hour)
3. Assessment of skills of an Individuals to pick AAC systems (One hour)
4. Easy implementation of AAC in various situations (One Hour)
5. Practical demonstration of introducing symbol-based communication (group activities) (One hour)
6. Thinktank- discussion of various cases and how alternative and augmentative methods could help otherwise. (Half an hour)
7. Make and Take session for parents and professionals to customize and take AAC kits back to their practice. (One and Half hour)

Takeaways/Outcome:

Start practicing AAC at their workplace, build a nexus or database of professionals who can share their experience and knowledge on AAC.

Participation statement:

Participants will be able to decide types of AAC systems for an individual, counsel, educate and encourage the family members to use it.

A brief description of each facilitator's background, including expertise related to the topic-

Prof. Usha Dalvi- Retd from Department of Audiology and Speech Language Pathology, SRM Medical College Hospital & Research Centre, AYJNISHD, MUMBAI. She has 31 years of experience as an Academician, Clinician and Researcher. Her interests are- Childhood and Adult Language Disorders, Motor Speech Disorders, Dysphagia and Augmentative and Alternative Communication. She has served as Speaker at 11 National and International conferences and workshop. She has presented more than 15 papers and published 22 papers.

Mr. Venkat Raman Prusty- Senior Speech Language Pathologist & Audiologist, at All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bhubaneswar, has an experience of 13 years, after Masters in Audiology, Speech Language Pathology. He holds his ASHA-CCC-SLP and has got training in PECS all levels, PROMPT, LAMP, PRT etc. He has been a speaker and trainer in 14 National Conferences and Workshops. Presented and published 19 Research papers including 5 original books.

Logistics- Batteries for devices, PCs to run software, printers, laminators and coloured cardboards,

Presenter (self) will arrange- Sets of small toys for demonstration (like toy car, eraser, thread, ball, toy person etc. Sets of symbol-based systems for demonstration, counseling, practice, assessment etc.