

Interprofessional education in AAC in Ontario: Enhancing teamwork

Project Summary

Centre for Leadership in Participation and Inclusion

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SHARING OUR WORK

1. We shared a summary of the project with the AAC clinics in Ontario at **AAC Rounds on November 18th, 2016**, held at Baycrest Centre, Toronto, Ontario.
2. We shared a poster presentation at the **Bloorview Research Institute Symposium on November 22nd, 2016**.
3. We reviewed project results with the **CEP Education Advisory Group on March 23th, 2017**.

WHAT WAS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) clinical practice involves providing communication systems and training for people who cannot speak or whose speech is difficult to understand. It includes both clinical and technical knowledge, requiring a team approach. Team members include Speech Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Communicative Disorder Assistants and Technologists.

Challenge: Over 375 staff work at 27 AAC clinics in Ontario and new staff are continually joining the clinics. New team members need to learn on the job and require significant support and training. AAC training can impact team performance, clinical outcomes and wait times for families.

Objective: To identify the learning needs and gaps for new team members working at AAC clinics in Ontario.

WHAT DID WE DO?

We used an online survey to identify and prioritize learning needs for new AAC staff. We invited 15 clinic managers, 15 experienced clinicians and 15 new staff (less than 5 years experience) to take part. Each person completed three linked surveys over a three-month period:

Survey 1: To identify learning gaps in areas of clinical and technical skills and knowledge, and team skills.

Survey 2: To rate the importance of addressing the gaps identified in Survey 1.

Survey 3: To build agreement by sharing group ratings and asking participants to reconsider their ratings from Survey 2.

IMPACT FOR CLIENTS, FAMILIES AND CLINICAL PRACTICE

This project will improve education programs offered through the **Centralized Equipment Pool (CEP)** for new staff in AAC clinics. Providing a strong foundation in AAC clinical practice will improve team based practice in AAC services. This will impact on the provision of quality services for children and youth with communication needs and their families.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Priorities for learning needs for new staff changed during the survey rounds over the 3-month period. We received input from new and experienced staff and clinic managers across Ontario clinics. A high response rate (33 respondents; 73% for all 3 surveys) showed strong interest from the clinical community in shaping the AAC education program.

Participants selected the three top learning needs in the following areas of practice:

Team Skills: communication skills, team approach, team dynamics

Clinical Knowledge: knowledge of devices, vocabulary and language, assessment tools and frameworks

Clinical Skills: practical hands-on training, assessment methods, team based skills

Technical Knowledge: exposure to a range of devices, keeping up with technology, problem solving and creativity

Technical Skills: on the job training, keeping up with technology changes, skills with hardware and software

NEXT STEPS:

1. An Education Advisory Group for the Centralized Equipment Pool has been formed. This group will meet two – three times per year to advise on future directions and projects for education.
2. Our goal is to develop an enhanced AAC curriculum for new staff working at clinics across Ontario. This will include a review of resources and materials already available, and development of a curriculum to meet the identified needs.
3. We will explore the best methods to deliver the content to all 27 Ontario AAC clinics.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS STUDY, PLEASE CONTACT:

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THANK YOU!

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