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“Augmentative Communication Technology for Adults”

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- I. Augmentative communication...what is it?
- II. Augmentative communication for adults vs. for children...not a competition, just some differences
 - A. First some similarities
 1. Everyone needs to communicate...every age, regardless of disability
 2. If the client is non-literate a primarily picture-based system is indicated
 3. If the client is functionally literate a text-only system is usually the most effective
 4. Devices need to be available which accommodate a variety of control methods (input)
 - B. A few characteristics and differences between nonspeaking adults and children
 1. Adults
 - a. Some adults may be nonspeaking from birth (developmental disability), but many are so by acquired disability due to trauma or disease
 - b. Therefore, many (but not all) adults have experienced full cognitive development prior to becoming nonspeaking
 - c. If an adult experiences a cognitive insult (stroke, TBI, etc.) they may permanently lose cognitive, as well as motor, ability resulting in significant communication loss as well (perhaps both receptively and expressively)
 - d. Some adults lose the ability to speak due to disease (cancer) or trauma to the oral-speech mechanism, but retain all cognitive abilities
 - e. Other adults lose the ability to speak (as well motor abilities) as a result of ongoing degenerative disease (ALS, PLS, Parkinson's, etc.)
 - f. Adults may live in their personal home, a rehab. center, a nursing home
 - g. Nonspeaking adults may receive services on an in-home outpatient basis, through an outpatient clinic, or through in-patient services in a rehab. center or nursing home. These services are often temporary and short-term
 - h. Nonspeaking adults acquiring a communication device may have funding available through Medicare, Veteran's Administration Medical Centers, personal health insurance, Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living Program, Telephone Equipment Distribution Program, Medicaid, etc.
 2. Children
 - a. Children are most often nonspeaking resulting from developmental disability and less likely due to trauma or disease (although this not uncommon)
 - b. Children usually continue to develop their cognitive abilities until adulthood
 - c. Children most often live in their natural home, although some live in residential facilities
 - d. Nonspeaking children most often receive services through the public schools or preschool programs and less often through private clinics and hospitals. Services through the public schools continue on an ongoing basis through age 21 or when the child leaves school
 - e. Nonspeaking children acquiring a communication device may have funding available through Medicaid, other state programs, personal health insurance, the public schools, etc.
- III. Which nonspeaking adults may be appropriate candidates for an augmentative communication device?
 - A. Those that recognize, and have competency of, at least one of the major representational systems, i.e., pictures and/or text
 - B. Those that demonstrate the desire and intent to communicate

- C. Those with functioning receptive skills
- IV. Other considerations for adults who are possible candidates to use an augmentative communication device
- A. Effective control/input method
 - B. Vision, hearing, fine motor ability
 - C. Ambulatory or non-ambulatory
 - D. Is the client's condition stable, improving, or deteriorating?
 - E. Functionally literate? Reads and spells at the 2nd to 3rd grade level or higher with consistency
 - F. If not functionally literate, does the client recognize many pictures or sight word reads? If so what size and in a field of how many?
- V. So what communication devices are effective for the nonspeaking adult with limited to moderate picture recognition (0-300+ pictures)? Most are levels-based w/changeable overlays recording devices
- A. GoTalk series: 4+ (22 messages), 9+ (48 messages), 20+ (105 messages) direct selection only
 - B. MessageMate series: Mini-MessageMate (8 messages-direct selection only) or Multi-Level MessageMate 40 (144 messages-direct selection and switch scanning)
 - C. Macaw 5 (great for up to 300+ messages- over 1,000 possible) direct selection and switch scanning
- VI. So what communication devices are effective for the nonspeaking adult who recognizes many pictures or sight words, but is not functionally literate? Dynamic display devices, speech synthesis, all have touchscreens except the Freedom Toughbook (item F.)
- A. Say-It! Sam Communicator (small) and DuraSam (ultra-small) – w/strong literacy supports
 - B. ChatPC-Silk (few literacy supports) & ChatPC-Silk+ (more literacy supports)-small handheld
 - C. Alt-Chat (few literacy supports) and Alt-Chat+ (more literacy supports) – mid-size 7” screen
 - D. Say-It! SAM Tablet w/Say-It! SAM Software (strong literacy supports)–mid-size 8.4” screen
 - E. Conversa w/Say-It! SAM PC Software (strong literacy supports)–full-size 12.1” screen
 - F. Freedom Toughbook w/ Say-It! SAM Software (strong lit. supports)–full-size 15.4” screen
- VII. So what communication devices are effective for the nonspeaking adult who is functionally literate? Text-only, speech synthesis, fully generative devices...fast, unlimited messaging (some more than others). Some with comprehensive computer capability (EZ Keys-based devices) including complete keyboard & mouse control via any input method, operation of any software program, full internet e-mail access, and environmental control
- A. NetTalk w/E Z Keys for Windows – full netbook computer capability, direct selection only
 - B. Allora – primarily speaking only, direct selection and basic switch scanning
 - C. SpeakOut - primarily speaking only, direct selection and basic switch scanning
 - D. Polyana-JT w/Persona – simple writing & speaking, direct selection & basic switch scanning
 - E. FreedomLite P w/E Z Keys - full computer capability, direct selection & switch scanning
 - F. Freedom Toughbook w/E Z Keys - full computer capability, direct selection & switch scan
 - G. PersonaMobile – A “smart phone” communication device...both a functional phone & comm. device!
- VIII. In summary, please remember...
- A. Although many similarities exist there are notable differences between nonspeaking adults and children
 - B. Always be aware of the status of the adult's health...is it stable, improving or deteriorating?
 - C. Recognize that most adults are able to provide significant input concerning their aug. comm. interests and often have clear expectations in the capabilities of a device such as...
 1. Fast message generation (if user is functionally literate) & Fast message retrieval
 2. Full computer access/capability including; word processing, surfing the net, e-mail, etc.
 3. Independent usage of the communication device...not dependent on others for message customization, control settings, etc.
 4. Environmental control
 - D. Available communication services available to adults are substantially shorter-term than for children
 - E. Adults (depending on age) may have a greater number of funding sources available than children