

Experiential augmentative communication device and strategy training for rehabilitation professionals has been provided as a component of 2-3 day intensive continuing education workshops. This presentation will review the "Deep Dive" format from its inception as staff training for the establishment of U.S. VA hospital Polytrauma Assistive Technology clinics to the development of a 1 year on-line graduate course in technology applications. A unique focus will be of the first international training course for rehabilitation staff of the Teleton Children's Rehabilitation Centers in Mexico. In 2009, the University of Pittsburgh School of Rehabilitation Science and Engineering was awarded a 5-year grant through Veteran Administration Services to assist with the development of Assistive Technology clinics at the five VA Polytrauma Centers across the U.S.A. One component of the grant was to provide "Deep Dive Workshops" to foster assistive technology knowledge, skills, and collaborative client evaluations for designated VA clinicians.

Training workshops include: Faculty presentations; Hands-on Lab activities with new technology led by faculty and vendors; Team evaluations of clients incorporating newly learned technologies; Participant team presentations of client evaluation; Recommendations with critique and feedback from the audience; and Planning sessions for incorporation of new technologies, strategies, evaluation procedures and outcome measurement tools into clinical practice.

Based on participants needs, training has included the following assistive technology areas: Augmentative Communication, Seating and Wheeled Mobility; Computer Access; Cognitive Prosthetics, Electronic devices for home modification; Sports and Recreation; and Adapted Driving. All participants take part in each of the assistive technology.

AAC Lab activities include stations with learning objectives such as: 1) ability to demonstrate basic programming of digitized speech messages on fixed overlay and dynamic display devices. 2) ability to identify specific features of devices with manual keyboards for spelling. 3) ability to demonstrate eye gaze selection technique for augmentative communication devices. 4) ability to demonstrate page navigation and software selection on synthesized speech devices. 5) rate quality and usefulness of AAC apps. Participants apply product evaluations of apps based on a set of criteria developed by Batavia and Hammer that include decisions regarding: affordability, compatibility, dependability, durability, ease of maintenance, and flexibility.

An evaluation template is provided for all participants to insure comprehensive assessments are completed. Variables participants address in case presentations include: client background, existing AT devices; body systems and structures, current daily living activities, participation in future meaningful activities through assistive technology, client goals, living situations and support systems, clinical trials and simulations, recommendations, recommended outcome measures, and implementation. Participants develop case presentations based on the team client evaluation and share with other workshop attendees.

To date, ten Deep Dives have taken place. Locations have included Pittsburgh, Richmond, Tampa, Denver, Palo Alto, and Mexico City. Workshop attendees have ranged from 35 to 70 for each workshop, yielding a total of over 500 participants.

The Mexico Deep Dive changed our focus from needs of veterans to pediatrics. The Teleton Children's Rehabilitation Centers (CRIT system) is a network of children's hospitals spread across Mexico that are supported by a national telethon. Begun in 1997, with construction of the first children's rehabilitation hospital, the network now includes 22 facilities spread throughout Mexico. Each CRIT incorporates a multi- and inter-disciplinary rehabilitation model to provide services to children with neuromuscular

disabilities. Physicians, social workers, psychologists, speech, occupational and physical therapists, devise treatment objectives and create tools and adaptations to help children become more independent in their daily lives.

Faculty for the Mexico City workshop included clinicians from the University of Pittsburgh, a manufacturer representative of the Permobil Company, and rehabilitation specialists from the La Paz and Guanajuato CRITs. Staff from eleven CRIT hospitals participated in a Deep Dive in August of 2015. Specialists from the fields of physiatry, physical medicine, occupational therapy, speech therapy, administration and the telethon staff attended the Deep Dive.

Unique challenges in providing AT services in Mexico are lack of AT vendors, lack of training resources, use of primarily low tech approaches, need for clinicians to construct or train families how to make switches, lack of funding through private or national health insurance, and high caseloads. Comparison of US private sector, VA hospital, and Telethon rehabilitation centers AT service models will be discussed.

Mexico trainees recognized that in light of rapidly changing assistive technologies, the goal of service provision remains the same, meeting the functional needs of the child. The solution has to include a focus on the adaptability of the local circumstances of the family and their environment. Participants recognized that obtaining specialty recognition through continuing education in assistive technology provides greater expertise and admiration from colleagues and consumers.

Perspectives of the participants included: Establishing a location or center dedicated to assistive technology is critical to marketing the service. Developing a team approach with specialty skills represented by rehabilitation disciplines is crucial to providing high quality services. Applying training knowledge of device selection, construction and application fosters a solution that can empower children to break cultural and environmental limits. The Mexico Deep Dive provided rehab professionals in Mexico the opportunity to continue to be at the forefront of innovative service provision thanks to the inter-fraternity with the University of Pittsburgh AT team.



The U.S. Society of Augmentative & Alternative Communication is approved by the Continuing Education Board of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) to provide continuing education activities in speech-language pathology and audiology. See course information for number of ASHA CEUs, instructional level and content area. ASHA CE Provider approval does not imply endorsement of course content, specific products or clinical procedures.



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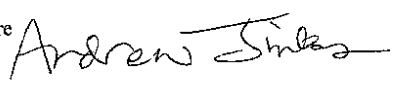
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