ComAlong PIMD – evaluation of a communication course for parents of children with multiple disabilities. Preliminary results.

Background:
ComAlong is a parental course about communication, communication development, play, responsive communication strategies and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) developed within the Swedish project AKKtiv (Augmentative and Alternative Communication - Early Intervention). The course content relies on recent evidence of early intervention for children with communicative disability and combines responsive communication and environmental milieu teaching with multimodal AAC strategies (Ferm, Andersson, Broberg, Liljegren & Thunberg, 2011). Each of the eight two-hour course sessions contains lectures, discussions and some time for socializing with the other group members (Ferm, Andersson, Broberg, Liljegren & Thunberg, 2011). The parents are given home assignments, for instance to use AAC at home (Jonsson, Kristoffersson, Ferm & Thunberg, 2011), and to share videotapes from their homes.

The ComAlong course generally targets parents of children with different diagnoses affecting communication, including children with PIMD (profound intellectual and multiple disabilities, as defined by Nakken and Vlaskamp (2007)). The content of the course is well in line with conclusions drawn by Wilder (2014) as well as Hostyn and Maes (2009) regarding key components for interaction and communication for individuals with PIMD.

The evaluations of ComAlong so far show good results for the larger target group (Ferm, Andersson, Broberg, Liljegren & Thunberg, 2011; Jonsson, Kristoffersson, Ferm & Thunberg, 2011) but the PIMD group has not been focused specifically. Course leaders have expressed that parents of children with PIMD might need a slightly adjusted ComAlong course due to the childrens' combinations of profound cognitive, motor and sensory impairments and that these parents often feel a less sense of belonging in a group with parents of children with other, more common diagnoses. The Habilitation Centers of Göteborg therefor regularly offer an adjusted ComAlong course with a PIMD focus, here referred to as ComAlong PIMD (Rensfeldt Flink, 2014).

Aim:
The aim of this study, which recently started in September 2015, is to do a first evaluation of the ComAlong PIMD course, and more specifically answer the following questions:

Do parents change their communicative style with their children regarding responsiveness after attending the ComAlong PIMD course?
Do the parents perceive themselves as being more responsive after the course and do they experience an increased use of AAC strategies after the course?
Do the parents' perceptions of their level of responsiveness match the formal assessment of their responsiveness?
How do the course leaders make adaptations of the course to this specific group?

Method:
The study has a mixed method design, and combines analyzed data from parent-child interaction with parental interviews.

Participants in the study are children with PIMD (profound intellectual and multiple disabilities) and their parents. Three families of children with PIMD starting the ComAlong
course in November 2015 will participate in the study. The families will receive five home visits where parent-child interaction will be video recorded. During the last visit an interview with the parent/s will also be done. The video tapes will be scored using the Responsive Augmentative and Alternative Communication style Scale (RAACS) and statistical analysis (Broberg, Ferm, Thunberg, 2012).

The interviews with the participating families and also with the course leaders will address perceptions of the effect of the course on parent-child interaction and the adaptations of the course. The interviews will be analyzed using content analysis (Lundman & Graneheim, 2004).

Data will be collected within the time frame of October 2015-March 2016.

**Result and conclusion**
During the presentation the preliminary results will be presented and discussed. The presentation will also include a description of the course format and its theoretical framework as well as some general experiences of conducting this course and why we felt the clinical need to target the PIMD group specifically. Some video-tapes of parent-child interaction will also be shared.

**Declaration of interest:**
The author has no financial or other interest in objects or entities mentioned in this paper.

**References:**


Program Planner/Instructional Personnel Relationship Disclosure Form

Program Planner/Instructional Personnel’s Name: Anna Rensfeldt Flink

Course Title: ComAlong PIMD – evaluation of a communication course for parents of children with multiple disabilities. Preliminary results.

HIPAA REQUIREMENTS
To comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), we ask that all program planners and instructional personnel insure the privacy of their patients/clients by refraining from using names, photographs, or other patient/client identifiers in course materials without the patient’s/client’s knowledge and written authorization.
I am in compliance with these policies: ARF

Relevant financial relationships are those relationships in which the individual benefits by receiving a salary, royalty, intellectual property rights, gift, speaking fee, consulting fee, honoraria, ownership interest (e.g., stocks, stock options, or other ownership interest, excluding diversified mutual funds), or other financial benefit. Financial relationships can also include “contracted research” where the institution gets the grant and manages the funds and the individual is the principal or named investigator on the grant.
Do you have relevant financial relationships to disclose?
No

Yes (if yes complete Financial Relationship Disclosure Form)

Relevant non-financial relationships are those relationships that might bias an individual including any personal, professional, political, institutional, religious or other relationship. May also include personal interest or cultural bias.
Do you have relevant non-financial relationships to disclose?
No

Yes (if yes complete Non-Financial Relationship Disclosure Form)

I attest that the information in this disclosure is accurate at the time of completion and I agree to notify ISAAC Conference 2016 (conference2016@isaac-online.org) of any changes to this information between now and the scheduled presentation date. I also understand that all completed Disclosure Forms must be incorporated within my paper proposal, as part of my Long or Extended abstract upload to the ISAAC Conference 2016 paper submission system.

Signature Date
30-oct-2015

Anna Rensfeldt Flink/ARF