

ISAAC Proposal:

Title: Establishing a Virtual Community of Practice: Enhancing AAC Intervention through Online Collaboration

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Target Age Group: No specific age category

Target Audience: Introductory

Paper Stream: AAC Clinical Practices, and Professional Education

Content Area Focus: Creative Directions in AAC Practice

Key Learning Objectives:

Describe models of AAC Service Delivery in use throughout the nation/ world

- Professionals will identify professional resources (e.g., community forum, community library) available on the Communication Matrix Community, a virtual community of practice.
- Attendees will discuss with colleagues at least 3 benefits of participating in an online community of practice.

Paper Presentation Preference:

- 30 minute platform presentation (20 minutes + 10 minutes questions)

Short Abstract:

AIM: The investigators will introduce the Communication Matrix Community, a virtual community of practice. The goal of our Community is to improve clinical and educational programs for children that require AAC, by supporting professional development.

METHOD: The Communication Matrix Community was developed through the support of a grant from the US Department of Education. Five major features of the Community of Practice were established, including: (a) The Forum: a navigation dashboard . (b) The Community Library: a collection of exceptional posts, (c) Curators: featured members that guide discussion on a specific theme or topic, (d) Tags : hashtags used to label posts with specific themes or topics and (e) Shared Science: communication profiles of rare disorders.

RESULTS: Since the launch of the Community in October of 2014, the number of users has steadily increased. Registered members include speech-language pathologists (46%), educators (22%), other professionals (16%), and family members (4%). **CONCLUSION:** The Communication Matrix Community supports professional development by leveraging the expertise and experiences of interventionists, teachers, and parents to improve intervention and assessment for individuals who require AAC.

Long Abstract:

Disclosures:

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS. The authors currently have the following financial interests in this paper. All authors receive a salary from Oregon Health & Science University and are employed on a federal grant, which supported the development of the online community of practice.

AIM: MOVING THE COMMUNICATION MATRIX BEYOND ASSESSMENT

The Communication Matrix is an assessment that is used by professionals and parents around the world to evaluate expressive communication in individuals at the very earliest stages of communication. Since it has been available online, users have requested information about implementing intervention and developing strategies to teach communication skills to individuals who would benefit from augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). These requests reflect a gap in clinical practice in speech-language pathology, related to a lack of knowledge of appropriate training for individuals with complex communication needs (CCN). A white paper produced by the Assistive Technology Industry Association (2012) that reported the results of a survey of 549 SLPs who serve the target population revealed a striking lack of

confidence with regard to AAC in general. Although these professionals were interested in and excited about AAC, 74% felt that they were inadequately prepared in this area; and more than 33% felt that their colleagues who prescribe AAC do not have the necessary knowledge to provide AAC services. In an effort to support all professionals and family members helping individuals with CCN, our research lab sought to address this problem and accommodate the requests of our users by developing a Virtual Community of Practice. This effort is supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

METHOD: DEVELOPMENT OF A VIRTUAL COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Communities of Practice

A community of practice leverages the knowledge of widely dispersed members to share information, opinions, problems and solutions unconstrained by time or geography (U.S. Department of Education/Office of Educational Technology, 2011; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002; Wenger, White & Smith, 2009). Our new Community uses social networking to improve clinical practice and implementation and to promote collaboration among professionals and parents who support individuals with CCN. Our virtual Community is designed to stimulate information sharing between members to boost their overall confidence with their professional skills. It encourages the participation of family members. Through discussion and collaboration, practitioners and family members can access customized “just in time” and “just for me” problem solving.

Implementation Science

Although the focus in speech-language pathology has been identifying evidence-based practices, many recognize that these practices are constrained by a lack of implementation (Cook & Odom, 2013). Communities of practice serve to spread ideas through multiple levels (e.g., individual, organization, communities, and systems). Practitioners in the field of communication disorders must consider methods for embedding empirical findings into everyday clinical practice. Communities of practice are seen as a promising implementation strategy for disseminating and integrating research-based strategies into everyday clinical or educational practice (Smith, Schmidt, Edelen-Smith, & Cook, 2013). The Communication Matrix Community of Practice has the potential to advance theory, knowledge, and practice in special education and speech-language pathology by disseminating evidence-based practice through the shared information curated on our site.

Personalized Learning

The new virtual Community provides a Forum for professionals and parents to share ideas, frustrations, inspirations, wisdom and questions. The Community Library section compiles user-generated best practices. Site curators create collections where they identify the most helpful posts, comments, and discussions and archive this content in the community library, providing a

knowledge base generated from an interdisciplinary perspective. The Shared Science section mines data from the many Communication Matrix assessments completed online to improve the knowledge base of users through composite profiles of communication skills in children with CCN, including many populations with rare disorders. Baseline composite profiles of communication skills in children with specific disabilities (such as Angelman Syndrome or Dandy Walker Syndrome) are included in this section, providing parents and professionals with benchmarks to which they may compare the progress of their own child or student. Our virtual community of practice is open to all interested users without cost. Community members include special educators, speech-language pathologists, family members, early interventionists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, assistive technology specialists, and researchers.

RESULTS: DEMONSTRATION OF THE NEW COMMUNITY AND USAGE DATA

This session will describe how our team of special educators, speech-language pathologists, and technical developers collaborated across disciplines to create and launch the virtual community of practice (www.community.communicationmatrix.org) and to measure its impact on our charter members who are participating in grant activities. The results of our efforts will be presented through a demonstration of the new Community of Practice and presentation of data on its usage since the community was launched. During the session, presenters will demonstrate the features of the Community of Practice to engage with colleagues, participate in reflective practice, and learn with experts across disciplines. Audience members will be encouraged to explore and ask questions about site features and to practice using the web site. The presenters will demonstrate features of 4 main aspects of the Community of Practice including: (a) the Forum, (b) Collections (c) Tags (Hashtags), and (d) Shared Science.

Since the launch of the Community in October of 2014, the number of registered users has steadily increased to over 400 as of this writing. Registered members include speech-language pathologists (46%), educators (22%), other professionals (16%), occupational/physical therapists (3%), researchers (3%), and family members (4%). While there is a base of consistent users who return to our site (50%), there are a number of new visitors who are consistently being directed to our site through promotion efforts (50%). The site also is widely used by persons who do not register as members. While the Community users are focused in the U.S. (85% as of this abstract), we hope to bring the globally diverse users of the Matrix assessment to share their knowledge with the Community through the integration of the two websites, translation of the Community Site, and continued outreach. Since the launch of the community, we have received a wealth of feedback from participants as well as a small group that have completed satisfaction surveys that have helped us to improve the capabilities of the Community. We will discuss how these data are used to

improve the Community and to inform our approach to reach out to a wide variety of stakeholders.

References

Assistive Technology Industry Association (2012). *Survey white paper: The critical need for knowledge and usage of AT and AAC among speech-language pathologists*. Retrieved from http://www.atia.org/files/public/ATIA%20SLP%20White%20Paper_9-18-12.pdf

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What was received? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
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| Honoraria | |
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