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Introduction

- Learning to communicate with medical professionals is a key transition skill [1]
- People with communication disabilities are at high risk for *preventable adverse events* (i.e., communication breakdowns that can result in injury).[2]
- Augmentative and alternative communication* (AAC) (e.g., alphabet and word boards, speech-generating devices, signs) can assist in communication, but is often under-utilized during medical interactions.
- The PACT strategy (Burns, Baylor & Yorkston, 2016)[3] can support AAC users during interactions with medical providers.
- Education professionals can teach students who use AAC how to use the PACT strategy to communicate with medical professionals.



Research Question

- What is the impact of a 45-minute online training on the PACT strategy on the knowledge and skills of preservice teachers?

Methods

- 62 general education students enrolled in a summer assistive technology class consented to participate.
- Case scenarios were used to assess knowledge of the PACT strategy to support successful communication.
- Study used a switching replications design[4]: students were randomly assigned to two groups, received the training at two different times, and completed case scenarios before and after training.
- Students' responses were scored on a 9-point rubric: one point was awarded for the correct use of each action step in the PACT strategy.
- A paired t-test approach was used to compare pre- and post-training scores.

References

- Scan QR Code for references



PACT Strategy

Prepare

- Patients discuss the purpose for the appointment, prepare communication supports, prepare to meet new partners and prepare to share important information.

Ask Questions

- Patients prepare questions they have, and anticipate questions their provider may ask



Create a Plan

- Patients review the structure of the appointment, and identify communication and decision-making roles



Take Away Information

- Patients document key information in a manner that is accessible and developmentally appropriate.

Instruction

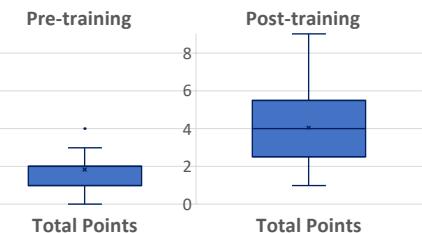
During the online training, students completed:

- a pre-test
- training in the PACT strategy,
- three *model cases*, *guided*, and *independent practice* activities
- a post-test



Results

- Training resulted in a statistically significant increase:
- On average, students doubled their demonstrated knowledge of PACT strategy steps



Discussion & Implications

- Results suggest online training using a strategy instruction approach is an effective way to build competencies in preservice professionals
- Since 2021,
 - more than 1,600 pre-service professionals have completed this module
 - Over 96% would recommend it to others
- This module is one of 10 free online modules available from the AAC Learning Center (Penn State University).
- Since 2019, more than 15,000 pre-service education professionals (from over 125 Colleges and Universities) have completed a module from the AAC Learning Center



Acknowledgements

The contents of this presentation were developed under an Erickson Discovery Grant and a grant from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) grant number #90REGE0014) to the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (RERC on AAC). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this presentation do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

