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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

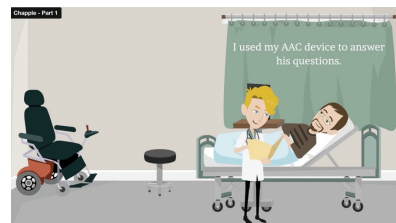
Take Away Information

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

Instruction

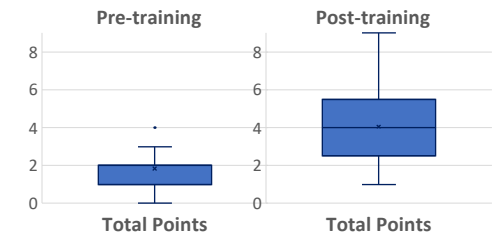
During the online training, students completed:

- 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



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