ABSTRACT

Characteristics of persons who facilitate AAC technology use with people who have amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) will be presented. Results of a survey to 19 AAC technology facilitators to PALS will be presented.

INTRODUCTION

ALS is a progressive neuromuscular disease resulting in speech impairments. Successful AAC use has been documented, however a review of the literature suggests that little is known about the skills, training, and learning styles necessary for the person who Facilitates use of AAC technology. Fried-Oken, Rau, Fox, Tullman & Lou (2004) reported that caregivers of PALS indicated a positive altitude toward AAC technology. Caregivers of persons with ALS (PALS) need develop a range of expertise to manage the technology solutions that are used by PALS.

RESULTS

AAC Technology Facilitators
19 AAC technology facilitators completed questionnaires. 1. A 2.25:1 female to male ratio was observed. They facilitated AAC for:
- 14 male PALS, age range 42-86
- 5 female PALS, age range 56-84

Gender of Participants

I. Computer Technology Interest

Participants reported interest in computer technology using a 17-item questionnaire. The scale ranged from 1= "not at all like me" to 5= "exactly like me."

The mean level of interest was 3.26 on the 5-point scale (S.D. = .74). Only one subject reported a mean interest level of 1.0, and in general, the level of computer interest in these participants was considered to be low.

TECHNOLOGY INTERESTS

II. AAC Technology Learning Mode

The learning mode questionnaire contained 4 items:
1. Preference for learning AAC technology alone with manuals, tutorials and AAC devices. The mean score was 3.3 (6-point scale) (S.D. = 1.54).
2. Preference for learning AAC technology in response to case scenarios. The mean score was 4.2 (S.D. = 1.48).
3. Preference for learning AAC technology in response to case scenarios, had a mean score of 5.1 (S.D. = 1.12).
4. Preference for learning AAC technology through detailed, step-by-step instruction, had a mean score of 4.6 (S.D. = 1.19).

Paired samples t-tests revealed significant differences between 1 & 2 and between 1 & 3. A review of these results reveals that PALS' AAC technology facilitators reported relatively similar preference for the first three learning modes, with the lowest preference for learning the AAC technology alone with manuals.

III. AAC Training

1. PALS received a mean of 3.4 hours (SD = 2.9) training.
2. AAC facilitators received a mean of 2.7 hours (SD = 2.2) training.
3. Ten out of 13 (77%) facilitators viewed the training as adequate.
4. The mean number of training hours desired was 2.0 hours (SD = 3.1).

CONCLUSIONS

1. More facilitators were female than male.
2. Facilitators expressed low interest in computers & technology in general, with the highest rating for interest in word processing/typing documents.
3. Facilitators received training from a variety of sources, however the majority of training was received from AAC/SLP.
4. Facilitators reported a preference for training in detailed one-on-one sessions, through workshops/group activities, and based on specific needs. They indicated that learning alone, with manuals and tutorials was not a desired method.
5. It appears that facilitators are chosen by the person with ALS to be the technology facilitator, based on the fact that they are willing to assist and their proximity. It is likely to expect that facilitators need training in amounts equal to or perhaps greater than the person using the device.

Quotes from Facilitators

- "I had an advantage, my husband was a computer whiz!"
- "I am a visual hands-on learner, workshop instruction works best for me, then allowing me to help the person with ALS."
- "My person with ALS was a quick study, so I learned from him."
- "Taking the device home with all the booklets that come with it and using them to try to operate it on our own was extremely frustrating and confusing."

TRAINING BY PROVIDERS

http://aac.unl.edu