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Use of Telecommunications for Social Participation by Adolescents with Disabilities: Facilitators and Barriers

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Project – TelDisView

Background

- Adolescence – Develop identity; individually, with peers and separate to parents (Turkstra, 2000)
- Adolescents use telecommunications for social networks
  (Carroll, Peck & Murphy, 2002; Harley, Winn, Pemberton, & Wilcox, 2007; Wei & Lo, 2006)
- Adolescents with a disability often have fewer friendships and are socially isolated
  (Matheson, Olsen, & Weisner, 2007; Skar, 1993; Stevens et al., 1996).

Telecommunication use by people with a disability

Disparity between people with disability versus people without
(Bryen, Carey, & Friedman, 2007; Canadian Council on Social Development, 2002; Kaye, 2000)

Barriers and **facilitators** often exist
(Bryen, et al., 2007; Bryen & Pecunas, 2004; Carey, Friedman, & Bryen, 2005; Greig, Harper, Hirst, Howe, & Davidson, 2008; Mann, Belchior, Tomita, & Kemp, 2005).

Telecommunication use by people with a disability: Barriers and facilitators

- Design issues – need for universal design
- Role of communication partner –both a facilitator and a barrier
- Training
- Cost
- Texting
- Access to equipment
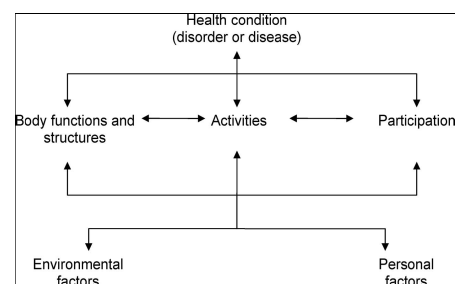- Unique needs of AAC-users

Contact Us

A need for research into…

- What are the *facilitators* and *barriers* to telecommunication use for adolescents with disabilities?

- Adolescents with Cerebral Palsy; a test case

Which Framework? International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO, 2001)

A personal interest…

☐ Which facilitators
and barriers can you observe?

METHOD

Consultation
Project development

'Nothing about us without us'

☐ Young people/adults with a disability

☐ Maori cultural advisors (CCS-Disability Action and University of Canterbury)

☐ Researchers/service providers in this field

Research design

☐ **Qualitative research design**
  - A collective case study method

  - Observations (at home and at school)

  - Interviews with participants and their communication partners

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Participants

☐ **Five dyads:**
  - 5 adolescents with cerebral palsy (15-21 years old) (ACP)

  - 5 significant communication partners (2 mothers and 3 foster mothers) (PTR)
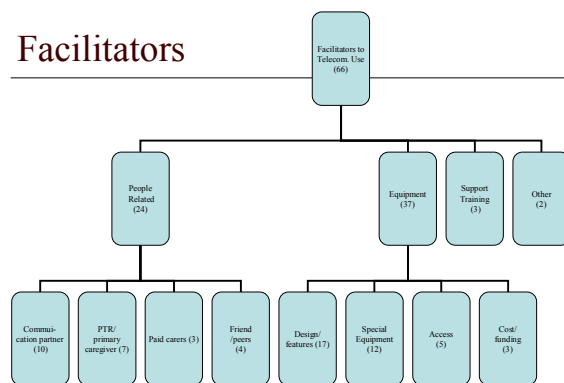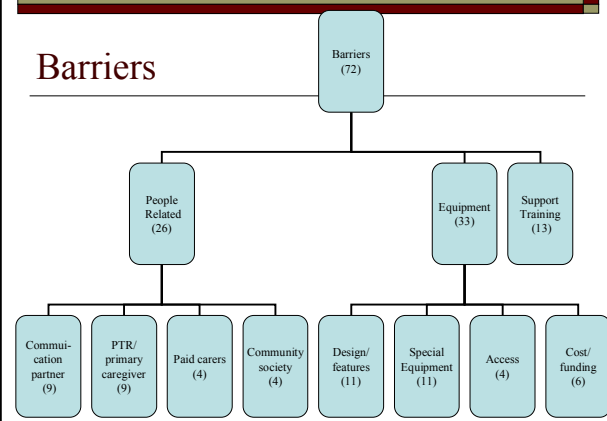
RESULTS

Key Findings

- Overall, 66 facilitators and 72 barriers identified. Categories included –

  - People-related
  - Equipment-related
  - Support/training-related
  - Other

Facilitators

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                    Facilitators to
                    Telecom. Use
                        (66)
        ┌───────────────────┬──────────┬──────┐
    People                Equipment  Support  Other
    Related                 (37)     Training  (2)
     (24)                              (3)
  ┌────┬────┬────┬────┐   ┌────┬────┬────┬────┐
Commui- PTR/  Paid  Friend Design/ Special Access Cost/
cation primary carers /peers features Equipment (5) funding
partner caregiver (3)  (4)  (17)    (12)          (3)
 (10)    (7)
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Barriers

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                      Barriers
                        (72)
        ┌───────────────────┬──────────┬────────┐
    People                Equipment  Support
    Related                 (33)     Training
     (26)                             (13)
  ┌────┬────┬────┬────┐   ┌────┬────┬────┬────┐
Commui- PTR/  Paid  Community Design/ Special Access Cost/
cation primary carers society features Equipment (4) funding
partner caregiver (4)  (4)   (11)    (11)          (6)
 (9)     (9)
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DISCUSSION

Five primary findings

- **E**quipment-related factors – many and varied.
- **P**eople-related factors also many and varied.
- **Parents/primary carers** - both a facilitators and a barriers
- Impact of l**iteracy skills** and **vocabulary selection** on telecommunication use
- T**raining and support** is vital to both ACP & PTR

Clinical implications

1. Assess environmental factors in broad context
2. Increase facilitators & decrease barriers
3. Increase training opportunities
4. Make equipment more accessible

Study Limitations

- Small sample size and focus on CP

- Limited expressive communication skills of some participants

Directions for future research

- Larger sample size with broader inclusion of other disability groups
- Develop an assessment tool/checklist based on findings
- Develop training
- Direct comparison with typically developing adolescents

Hopes and dreams...adolescents

ACP: "ah, heaps of friends talking to me … on the internet or usually on MSN or anything like that."

ACP: "I'd like to see through the magic of the phone to see people, and do you know how there's a little screen to see people"

ACP (has visual impairment): "it's best to have a big, big, big screen and big letters that's what I would dream"

Hopes and dreams…parents

PTR - "well it's all life skills so I think that's important…cause that's a security thing. It's a link to everybody so I think that's quite important"

PTR (of an AAC-user) " I just think if S could get a wee bit of a love for the computer and how to work these things it would open up a new world to him in his time...for other people they might be able to do it in half an hour, whereas he might need two hours, but the information stuff will still be there, you know… and he can access it as he, and when he likes... and he's not rushed to do it, he doesn't have to perform, he can have time to think about it and then access it and process it..."

Questions/Discussion

Project – TelDisView

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