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

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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 & Lu, 2006)
- Adolescents with a disability often have fewer friendships and are socially isolated (Matheson, Olsen, & Weinzer, 2007; Skur, 1993; Stevens et al., 1996).

Telecommunication use by people with a disability

\textbf{Disparity} between people with disability versus people without

(Bryen, Carey, & Friedman, 2007; Canadian Council on Social Development, 2002; Kaye, 2000)

\textbf{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).

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

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

Barriers

DISCUSSION

Five primary findings

- Equipment-related factors – many and varied.
- People-related factors also many and varied.
- Parents/primary carers - both a facilitators and a barriers
- Impact of literacy skills and vocabulary selection on telecommunication use
- Training 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
References