Barriers to AAC Use in ASD: Insights From India

Ritika Vatsa, MA, CCC-SLP, Lauren J. Hummel, PhD, CCC-SLP
rvatsa@lifespan.org, lhummel@lifespan.org
Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities (CADD)
Communication, Occupational And Sensory Treatment (COAST) Clinic
Bradley Hospital
A Lifespan Partner (www.lifespan.org)
1011 Veterans Memorial Parkway, East Providence, RI 02915

Abstract
Barriers to AAC use by children with ASD typically described include caregiver attitudes and expectations. One speech-language pathologist's experience reaching out to parents in India resulted in consideration of other unexpected barriers to AAC use by caregivers in Rhode Island. Team application of those insights to caregiver education are described.

Learner Outcomes:
- Describe barriers to AAC in ASD as discussed in the literature.
- Discuss caregiver insights based on questionnaire results from India.
- Explain how one SLP's initiative in India led to changes in a team's outlook in Rhode Island.

Summary
- Efforts made by SLPs to provide AAC to children with ASD are often met with inconsistent use of aided systems, device abandonment, or limited practice opportunities.

- In the CADD in Rhode Island, we are often more successful with partner use of aided systems for comprehension than partner encouragement of aided expressive system use.

- In spite of these barriers, one SLP (Ritika Vatsa) was inspired by the behavioral improvement in the children served in the CADD school and went to India to share with parents and professionals the potential for AAC. Comments and feedback of parents and professionals in India included unexpected barriers to AAC.

- In Rhode Island, new information from teachers and child care workers about AAC was obtained and preliminary improvements experienced in our collaborative AAC process, based on the India experience.

Future Directions

Rhode Island:
- On-going cross-disciplinary education
- Re-tooling AAC evaluation process
- Assess caregiver knowledge about AAC during outpatient evaluations

India
- Periodic workshops
- Maintain relationships through website, online interactions
References

