

**Prevalent Practices and
Critical Concerns for
Individuals with ASD and
Complex Communication Needs**

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Communication as a Human Right

- **Communication is an essential human characteristic**
- **Development of communication is imperative**

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**Lifelong Impacts of
Communication Deficits**

- **Difficulty establishing relationships**
- **Exclusion from community activities**
- **Poor academic outcomes**
- **Difficulty accessing services**
- **Few recreational opportunities**
- **Engagement in socially unacceptable and challenging behaviors**

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Improved Functional Communication

- Multimodal communication
- Involves all communicative partners
- Evidence-based strategies
- Implementation across natural contexts
- Significant resources required



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Individualization

- Communication mode matches context, individual skills, and stakeholder preferences
- Assessment includes input from caregivers, educators, and other frequent communicative partners



(Miranda, in press)

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Evidence-based Interventions

- Implemented across service providers, family members, and peers
- Implemented with high fidelity
- Avoidance of ineffective and unethical “treatments”




(Carr & Durand, 1985; Chung, Carter, & Sisco, 2012; Foxx & Mulick, 2016; Ogletree, 2016; Plumb, Wetherby, Oetting & Craig, 2013; Prelock, et. al., 2012; Symon, 2005; Whalon, Conroy, Martinez & Worch, 2015)

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Snake Oil Salesmen Prey On Families

- Feelings of desperation and frustration due to seemingly overwhelming and pernicious nature of limited communication development
- Perceived intractable nature of severe communication challenges
- Unknown etiology of some cases
- Effort involved and perceived modest progress associated with intensive interventions for individuals with CCN
- Seductive influence of advertisements and promotions for so-called novel approaches
- Exaggerated claims of "cures" and extraordinary benefits
- For example: facilitated communication, rapid prompting method, supported typing

 (Ganz, Katsiyannis, & Morin, 2018; Lillienfeld, Marshal, Todd, & Shane, 2014; Travers, Ayers, Simpson, & Crutchfield, 2016)

Continuing Challenges

- Availability of high-quality service providers
- Research-to-practice
- Instruction and coaching for multidisciplinary interventionists and caregivers
- Collaboration across settings



... Challenges

- Effectiveness of AAC-based interventions has been generally established, given structured implementation, but...



Future of Intervention Approaches for Individuals with ASD and CCN

- **Individualize based on characteristics of person with CCN**
 - Age
 - Concomitant diagnoses
 - Communication level
- **Context and setting (generalization)**
- **Maintenance of outcome measures**



Future ...

- **Interventionists (e.g., natural communicative partners)**
 - Social validity, feasibility, and acceptability
 - Stakeholder preference
 - Cultural responsiveness
 - Training/coaching and treatment integrity



Future ...

- **Multimodal communication**
 - Mobile technology
 - Display qualities
 - Navigation
 - Equitable access
- **Instructional strategies**
 - Components needed or not needed (e.g., behavioral and developmental strategies)
 - Dosage



(Ganz, Morin, et al., 2018; Reichle, Simacek, & Parker-McGowan, in press)

Future ...

- **Naturalistic and real-world implementation**
 - Critical and pivotal communication skills
 - Expanding vocabulary
 - Expanding complexity of language and grammar
 - Increasing learning across domains (e.g., literacy, behavior, academic subjects, and social opportunities)

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Future ...

- **Motivation to communicate**
 - Preferred items, activities, and people
 - Current motivation, related to its degree of reinforcement value or satiation

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Final Note

- **Personnel preparation and retention is critical**

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