

Pediatric Nurses' Perceptions and Experiences with AAC

Abstract

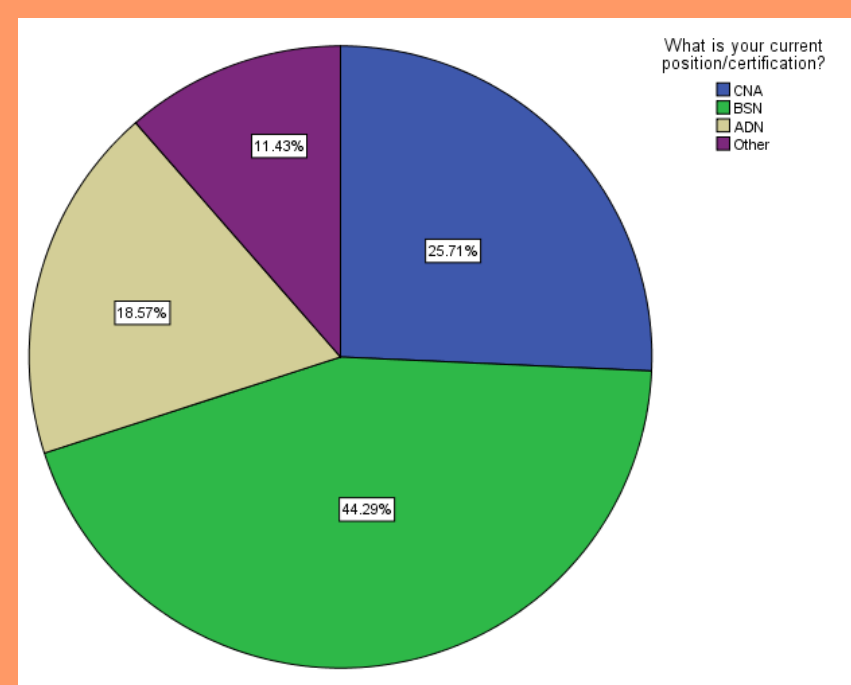
Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) methods often facilitate communication with patients with complex communication needs (CCN). Healthcare workers often come into contact with patients with CCN; however, it is unclear in these situations how those healthcare workers communicate with these patients. This preliminary study aims to determine the amount and type of AAC training for pediatric healthcare workers. The end results of this study will be to develop appropriate training materials to meet nurses' needs, reduce their stress, and enhance the quality of life for patients' with CCN.

Rationale

- Communication between healthcare workers and patients with CCN is difficult inducing stress and frustration, especially in the acute care setting (Hemsley & Balandin, 2004, Radtke, Tate, & Happ, 2012, Hemsley, Balandin, & Worrall, 2012).
- Healthcare workers struggle to find the time and lack the desired training to communicate well with their patients with CCN. The patients, nurses, and family members/caregivers see a gap in the training and quality of care (Finke, Light, & Kitko, 2008).
- In pediatric acute care settings, it is unclear how often healthcare workers interact with patients with CCN and how they communicate with these patients; this study examines the amount of training that they receive regarding communication and AAC implementation.
- Research questions for this study were:
 - (1) What are the experiences of healthcare workers with patients with CCN, particularly pediatric patients, related to communication?
 - (2) What training do healthcare workers receive related to patient-provider communication?
 - (3) What are the attitudes of healthcare workers related to communication with patients with CCN?

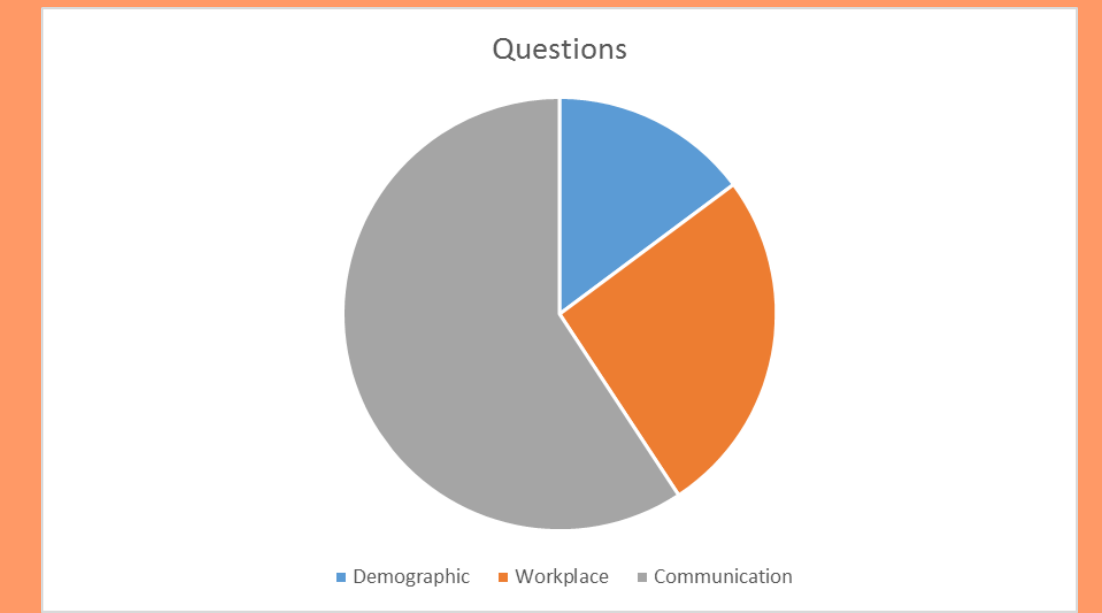
Methods

- Participants:
 - 82 healthcare professionals currently employed by East Tennessee Children's Hospital
 - Years with Current Certification: >9 years (36.62%), 5-6:11 years (17.82%), 1-2:11 years (16.44%), 3-4:11 years (13.70%), 7-8:11 years (10.96%), <6 mo (2.74%), 6 mo-1 year (2.74%)
- Materials
 - Anonymous online survey available through the *Qualtrics* UTK server.
 - Survey provided to individuals via an anonymous link, shared from nursing supervisors with surveys completed at participant's leisure.



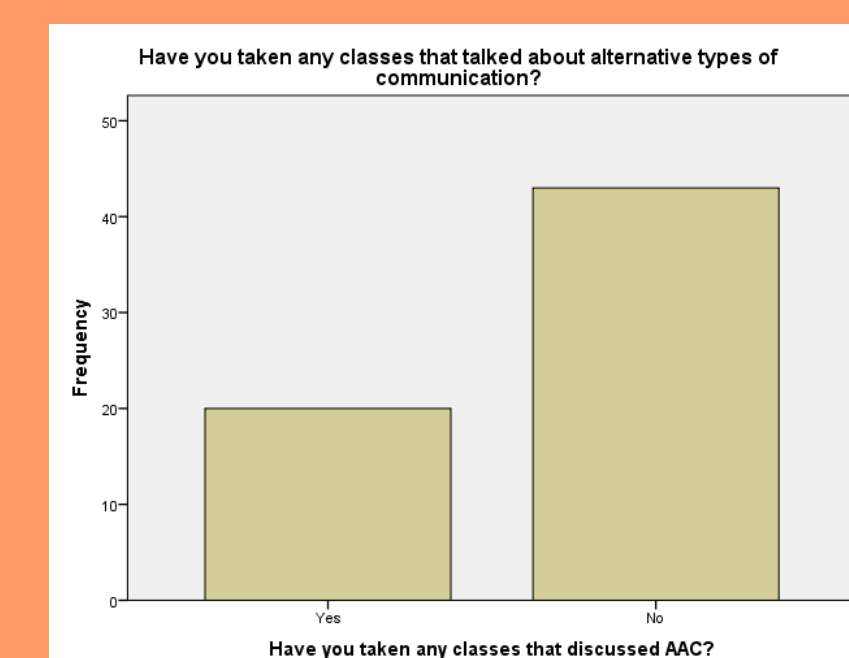
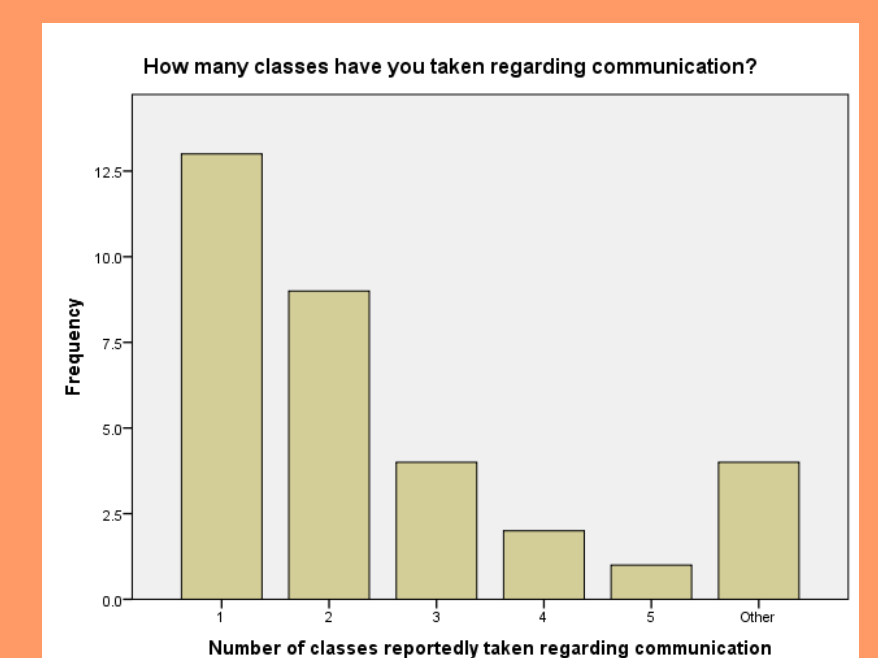
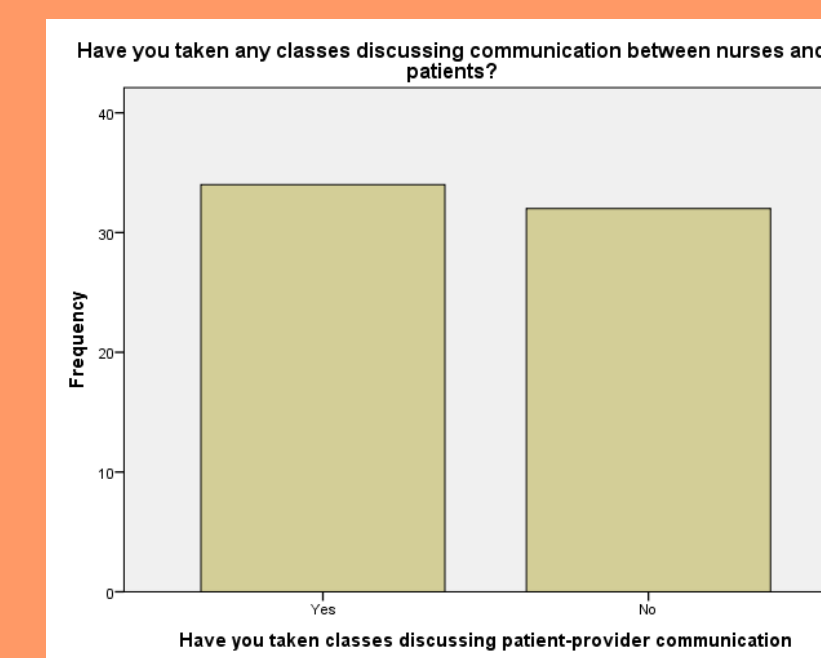
Analyses

- Three categories of questions were identified:
 - Demographic information
 - Workplace questions
 - Communication questions
- Questions were identified and analyzed based on relevancy to research questions.
- Reliability:
 - Increasing amounts of missing data with progression of the survey (from 11.1% for the initial section of questions to 44.3% for the final items of the survey)
 - Approximately 54% completion rate (45/83) for the survey in its entirety.



Results

- Healthcare staff reported:
 - Seeing 1-12 patients per day
 - Seeing 1-6 patients with CCN per day
- Thirty-four of sixty-six respondents stated they have taken a class on patient-provider communication
- Fifty-four percent (43/63) of respondents stated they had not taken an AAC course
- Greater than 23% of respondents stated they see greater than 1 patient with CCN per week.
- Thirty out of forty respondents (75%) stated they would contact the language line or interpreter services if they needed help with communication
- Only 4/40 respondents (10%) stated they would contact Speech Therapy



Conclusions

A low completion rate of this survey study indicate that healthcare workers may not see the importance of communication and AAC in their work. Healthcare workers appear to receive some patient-provider communication training though the number of courses are inconsistent. There appears, however, to be a lack of training in AAC despite the regular contact with patients with CCN. Our research shows that when questioned regarding communication, most healthcare workers (75%) in our sample would seek help from interpreter services or the language line while only 10% voicing that they would seek assistance from Speech Therapy.

Future Research: More information is needed from healthcare workers related to their training, priorities, and experience with AAC, patients with CCN, and communication. Additionally, more education is needed related to the role of Speech Therapy in acute care settings.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the employees and staff at East Tennessee Children's Hospital (ETCH) who took part in the study, as well as the administration at ETCH for their continued support.

Disclosure Statement: The authors have no relevant financial or nonfinancial relationships to disclose.

Questions/comments: amcroycn@uthsc.edu