Speaker Disclosure

Jennifer Drenchek-Cristiano  
Financial: Jennifer Drenchek-Cristiano is the owner of Technology for Education and Communication Consulting Inc. Mrs. Cristiano is also an adjunct faculty member at Stockton University in New Jersey.  
Non-Financial: Jennifer Drenchek-Cristiano holds a volunteer position on the American Board for AAC Specialty Certification (AB-AAC).

Mike Cole M.S. CCC-SLP  
Financial: Mike is President of Use Your Words, P.C., private practice  
Non-Financial: Mike holds a volunteer position on the American Board for AAC Specialty Certification (AB-AAC)

Katya Hill PhD CCC-SLP  
Financial: Katya is the Senior Director of UPMC AAC Program, & a professor in CSD at the University of Pittsburgh with research funding from NIH, NIDILRR, and the Beckwith Institute.  
Non-Financial: Katya holds a voluntary position on the American Board for AAC Specialty Certification (AB-AAC) and voluntary position as Chair on the American Board for AAC Specialty Certification (AB-AAC) and voluntary position as Executive Director of the AAC Institute.

Michael O'Leary M.A. CCC-SLP  
Financial: Michael is a graduate student researcher pursuing his PhD at the University of Pittsburgh with funding from the NIH and NIDILRR  
Non-Financial: Michael is a volunteer for the AAC Institute and ICAN Talk Clinic. He also holds a volunteer board position for the American Board for AAC Specialty Certification (AB-AAC).

Learning Objectives

The AB-AAC will present an ethics course partly satisfying the requirement for board Certification.  
▪ Relate the 5 SGD Rules of Commitment to the 4 principles of ethics: autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice.  
▪ Self-evaluate your competencies for providing an ethical evaluation resulting in a SGD funding report based on the 5 SGD Rules of Commitment.  
▪ Consider at least 2 strategies to ensure that you are conducting a fair and unbiased SGD trial process independent of the funding source.

Session Evaluation and CEUs

Session Feedback Evaluation  
▪ Your Feedback is very important to us. Please be sure to complete session evaluations through the ATIA mobile app.

CEUs  
▪ ATIA 2024 education sessions are reviewed for ACYREP, AOTA, ASHA, CRC and IACET CE eligibility. Not all sessions are approved for each specialty CEU. Please see each session description for CEU availability.  
▪ Full information: atia.org/atia-2024-orlando-ceus
4 Principles of Ethics

ASHA Principles of Ethics

https://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/practice/ethics/PrinciplesofEthics.pdf

4 Principles of health care ethics

- Autonomy
- Beneficence
- Non-Maleficence
- Justice

Autonomy

- The right of patients to retain control over their bodies.
- SLPs can suggest or advise, but not persuade/coerce in patient choices.
- Patient choices are according to their personal values and beliefs.
**Beneficence**

- SLPs do all they can to benefit the client in each situation.
- All procedures/treatments must be with the intention to do the most good for the patient.
- Beneficence requires SLPs to develop and maintain a high level of knowledge & skills.
- SLPs are trained in the most current & best practices.
- What is good for one patient will not necessarily benefit another.

**Non-Maleficence**

- To do no harm!
- The end goal for all SLP’s decisions.
- SLPs consider whether other people or society could be harmed by a decision, even if it is made for the benefit of an individual patient.

**Justice**

- The element of fairness in your clinical decisions as an SLP.
- A balance in decisions that burden and benefit.
- As equal as possible the distribution of resources and treatments.
- SLPs should uphold applicable laws and legislation with making choices.
Five SGD Funding Rules of Commitment

Rule 1: Be committed to following your professional code of ethics, scope of practice, and ASHA policy documents
Rule 2: Be committed to conducting a comprehensive AAC evaluation to gather evidence required for SGD funding.
Rule 3: Be committed to a fair and unbiased SGD trial process independent of the funding source.
Rule 4: Be committed to fully informing the client and family of the comprehensive range of AAC intervention options during the evaluation.
Rule 5: Fully disclose potential conflicts of interest regarding financial and non-financial relationships.

Higdon, Hill (2015)

Rule 1: Be committed to following your professional code of ethics, scope of practice, and ASHA policy documents

- AAC requires a robust knowledge and skill set, if not mentored experience
- ASHA expects clinicians to engage only in those aspects of service consistent with their level of education, training and experience
- AAC is a unique clinical area of service delivery for SLPs because clients with severe communication disorders, families, and other professionals including physicians have turned to the SLP to make decisions about the recommendation of AAC interventions and technology that may result in purchasing or funding an SGD.

Higdon, Hill (2015)

Rule 2: Be committed to conducting a comprehensive AAC evaluation to gather evidence required for SGD funding.
Rule 3: Be committed to a fair and unbiased SGD trial process independent of the funding source.

- Commitment to conducting a comprehensive AAC evaluation (Rule 2) and involving the individual and family as partners in the SGD selection process (Rule 4) will provide the external, clinical, and personal evidence needed for fair and unbiased SGD trials.
- The SLP must function independently, be in charge of the situation, and not allow the AAC manufacturer to perform the evaluation. SGD trial data collection, data analysis, and written interpretation of trial results for any reports are completed by the SLP.

Higdon, Hill (2015)

Rule 4: Be committed to fully informing the client and family of the comprehensive range of AAC intervention options during the evaluation.

- The client and family need to be involved in the technology selection process.
- The information base of the client and family needs to be built.
- Client and family must be informed about:
  - The range of features of SGD's
  - Implications of selecting one type of SGD over another
  - Consequences of the choice affecting short and long term outcomes

Higdon, Hill (2015)

Rule 5: Fully disclose potential conflicts of interest regarding financial and non-financial relationships.

- Each evaluation must contain a signature of assurance statement requires that the signing SLP is confirming that they independently performed the evaluation, wrote the SGD funding request, and “is not an employee of and does not have a financial relationship with the supplier of the SGD.”
- SLPs should not sign or submit the SGD funding request if they did not conduct the evaluation and write the report being submitted for funding.

Higdon, Hill (2015)
Learning Objective 2
Self-evaluate your competencies for providing an ethical evaluation resulting in an SGD funding report based on the 5 SGD Rules of Commitment.

AAC competency domains supporting the 5 Rules of SGD Funding

Using the AAC Competency Domains, SLP's can structure their practice to ensure they are following the 5 rules of SGD funding.

Domain 1: Professionalism
- Maintain the highest level of ethics and professionalism to provide services without preference, conflict of interest, or bias, as well as remain informed of research and evidence-based practices in the area of AAC evaluation intervention, and help advance knowledge base related to AAC.
**Assessment and Diagnosis**

- Conduct a comprehensive, interprofessional assessment utilizing evidence and research-based practices to evaluate the individual’s communication abilities in order to design a communication system on a continuum of no-technology to high-technology supports.

**Development and Implementation of a Treatment Plan**

- Construct evidence-based treatment plans to assist diverse stakeholders in establishing and implementing measurable goals for individuals with complex communication needs (CCNs).

**Design and Use of AAC Technology**

- Design, evaluate, and innovate technology solutions to customize integrated systems to optimize communication for individuals with complex communication needs (CCNs).
Leadership, Collaboration, and Education

- Advocate, education, and awareness on the use of AAC among stakeholders and the community to facilitate and foster AAC across the lifespan.

Ways to expand competencies in AAC across domains

- Attend diverse trainings at the intermediate and advanced level of AAC practice
  ○ trainings should be spread out between vendor trainings and other research backed AAC trainings
- Actively seek out new research in the field and evaluate its impact on clinical practice in order to provide up-to-date evidence based practice interventions
- Establish and maintain strong working relationships with AAC users, families, interdisciplinary teams, and other community members to support AAC across environments
- Collaborate with colleagues and advocate with administrators to ensure that the SLP has the appropriate tools and resources to facilitate best practice

Self Evaluation

- Journaling
  ○ Include more self evaluation techniques
A wide scope of practice offers many opportunities to help a wide variety of people, but ethical concerns can arise...

SLPs can be under-trained in the area of AAC

Myriad of AAC choices and commercial nature of AAC complicates:
- Evaluation
- Implementation

SLPs can become over-reliant on vendors for:
- Evaluation
- Decision Making
- Treatment Plans

SLPs can become over-reliant on Social Media

Pros: Access to professionals across the country (or world) to answer questions
Cons: Possible HIPAA/FERPA violations, unsure if answering party fully understands your client and whether or not they have a bias in the recommendations or suggestions made, difficulty following threads of responses with many conflicting opinions

Learning objective 3
- Consider at least 2 strategies to ensure that you are conducting a fair and unbiased SGD trial process independent of the funding source.
Protect your signature and your license

- Be wary of people asking to have you sign reports you did not write
- In filling out funding paperwork if they are asking for your license, did you make the recommendation for that system?
- Did you have the proper tools and knowledge to write and recommend the system?

Ethics Case Study

- The use of an SGD and prompt scheduling to discuss SGD and voice banking options was discussed at the patient’s first visit to the ALS clinic, an interdisciplinary professional practice clinic. The patient declined an SGD or AAC intervention expressing the notion that he will “beat the diagnosis.”
- The SLP must work with the patient to respect the fact that he declines an SGD consultation/evaluation at the SLP/AAC specialty clinic. Ethic’s Principle?
- The SLP needs to find a solution that would prevent him from being without an effective means of communication when speech is lost, which is in his best interest. Ethic’s Principle?
- Although a comprehensive AAC evaluation and fully informing the patient of all of his SGD options is the best choice, forcing the patient to schedule an appointment might be harmful to his overall positive attitude to beat ALS. Ethic’s Principle?
- Finally, the SLP needs to consider the impact that the patient's choices might have on others who are seeking an evaluation for an SGD and are using a loaner SGD to maintain communication during the funding process. If this patient waits until a loaner SGD is immediately needed, others may be deprived of receiving a loaner. Ethic’s Principle?
- So before making the final decision the SLP must consider all four principles of ethics as an ASHA member, which will help the SLP make the choices that will have the best possible benefits for both the patient and society. What did you consider?

Hypothetical case: Male client with bulbar onset ALS

What principle(s) of ethics are being violated?

- 4 y.o. girl with ASD and no functional speech.
- I.U. pre-school program not providing SGD; policy is to wait until transition to school-aged program.
- Classroom SLP’s treatment on developing speech & AAC treatment limited to voice output switches.
- I.U.'s AAC program’s policy is for AT Specialists to provide classrooms/SLPs with loaner equipment and recommendations based on student observations.
- I.U. AT Specialists have no required certification or training but may bid into positions based on seniority.
What principle(s) of ethics are being violated?

- 15 y.o. student with ASD and no functional speech.
- School district is an Apple dedicated district.
- All students who need AAC receive an iPad with the same communication app.
- District directs IEP team to website training on app.
- IEP goals/objectives related to communication based on curriculum.
- Present levels and measurement of goals (based on curriculum) are not measurable.
- Transition Plan does not include goals/objectives related to daily communication, legislation, and goals for IADLs, ADLs, or independent living.

What principle(s) of ethics are being violated?

- Patient hospitalized with URI and mechanically vented for 6 weeks.
- No AAC provided.
- Family requested AAC; SLP brought in AAC manufacturer w/ SGD w/ eye gaze access.
- Not calibrated and no training; set for high performance spelling display.

What principle(s) of ethics are being violated?

- 71 y.o. patient in SNF for rehab after stroke.
- Dx with severe dysarthria; has no intelligible speech.
- SLPs at SNF providing treatment for swallowing disorder, but no AAC interventions.
- Family concerned about lack of functional communication.
- SLP's productivity ratings would fall if time spent on AAC treatment.
- After 1 month, wife purchases ABC puzzle for communication using spelling.
AAC clinical service situations: Considering ethics

- Productivity requirements that prevent spending appropriate time to conduct comprehensive AAC evaluations.
- Productivity requirements that require SLPs to conduct 31-minute therapy sessions rather than 60-minute sessions to comply with CMS billing codes.
- CMS billing codes that are unrealistic timed service limits which do not compensate SLPs for highly skilled services.
- Parents questioning AAC intervention out of the desire for their child to develop natural speech.
- Under trained SLPs using AAC sales representatives to complete AAC evaluations.
- Not fully informing client/family of all AAC options during SGD trials to make best informed choice based on evidence.
- Using AAC manufacturer's online SGD funding templates rather than completing a comprehensive AAC evaluation.

Contact information

Website: http://aacspecialist.org
E-mail: info@aacspecialist.org

References

ACVREP Start Code:
zule24

QR Codes
Request to be placed on the newsletter
Link to the AB-AAC website for updates and application (coming soon!)

Questions
Thank You