

**Determining the effectiveness of a collaborative support model to train
community-based care providers how to implement AAC with persons who have
Alzheimer's disease in community settings**

Funded by: National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) (grant # H133A31402)

Melanie Fried-Oken, Ph.D.

Charity Rowland, Ph.D.

Joyce Beedle, RN

Dates: 05/01/2007 - 04/30/2008

Abstract

Given the uneven nature of the decline in communicative functions in people with dementia, interventions are best targeted at the level of relatively intact functions (Azuma & Bayles, 1997). A number of indirect treatment approaches have been developed to address this, including specially prepared memory books that contain autobiographical material, daily schedule information, and problem-resolution information (Bourgeois, Dijkstra, Burgio & Allen-Burge, 2001). Such interventions have improved communication between people with dementia and caregivers when staff are trained in using them and the material is individually tailored (Bourgeois et al., 2001).

There is little scientific inquiry that addresses AAC strategies to improve quality of life for persons with dementia and their families, yet the potential benefit is great. Our overall research agenda is to demonstrate that AAC use is a promising avenue for improving the lives of adults with dementia and of the families and caregivers who need to communicate with them. This mini-seminar brings together two international efforts aimed at improving conversation, interaction, and quality of life for persons with dementia and their caregivers. Both projects employ AAC technology as support tools. Presentations from the University of Dundee and the Oregon Health & Science University (Portland, Oregon, USA) will provide evidence that conversation support tools

for persons with dementia should be included in clinical pathways and research programs that address AAC efficacy.