

19th Biennial Conference of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC)
R13 NIDCD Conference Grant
Awarded to Oregon Health & Science University
Melanie Fried-Oken, PhD, Principal Investigator
February, 2020

This award will support an international scientific meeting entitled: The 19th Biennial Conference of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC): Communication Beyond Borders, to be held in Cancun, Mexico from August 1st-6th, 2020. The primary goal is to convene people from 15 different ISAAC chapters and 42 countries to promote and inspire innovative scientific research & development and clinical practice for AAC. One unique objective of the 2020 meeting is to establish a Spanish speaking ISAAC chapter that incorporates Spanish speakers from the US, Central America, South America, Spain and elsewhere. The primary audience will be interprofessional with delegates from multiple stakeholder groups (including people with disabilities and families) engaged in addressing the needs of people with severe communication disorders worldwide. More than 4 million Americans and an estimated 97 million citizens worldwide present with significant communication disorders that affect their ability to use speech and language to communicate. For persons who have little or no intelligible speech and/or difficulty with language, the use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) tools is critical to support communication and facilitate their participation in all aspects of daily life. It is estimated that globally 83% of individuals with severe communication impairments do not receive needed communication supports from trained professionals.

ISAAC 2020 will be devoted to create a forum where researchers, practitioners, people who use AAC and families critically explore the current status of people with severe communication impairments from all cultures. The theme Communication Beyond Borders will challenge the AAC community to think beyond their local work contexts to embrace broader global practices. The conference represents ISAAC's efforts (1) to build AAC professional capacity in countries that are traditionally underserved, and to encourage manufacturers, researchers, people who use AAC, families, and professionals globally to take an active part in research that ensures a more rapid translation of research into practice, and practice into research; (2) to keep developing best practices and quality services for individuals who use AAC by staying informed and actively engaging with practice innovations and advances; and (3) to foster partnerships and connections among and across local, national and international communities. Nine different conference formats will be held, including master classes taught by content experts and research discussion panels moderated by people with disabilities. Three specific aims are proposed that will **(1) bring experts to the meeting for presentation of the latest AAC science and to interact with young professionals; (2) bring people with disabilities and underrepresented participants to the meeting; and (3) support learning and informal networking.** The Cancun International Conference Center is accessible, with a blender bar to modify texture diets; a quiet room for sensory breaks and family care resources. A formal evaluation post-meeting is planned by ISAAC survey.