Makaton: Facilitating Effective Communication

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Objectives

- Introduction to the communication system Makaton
- Review the research on use of basic sign language with people with Intellectual Disabilities
- Discuss future areas for development
- Learn Makaton!
Makaton

- System signs and symbols along side speech to aid communication
- Based in BSL
- Basic signs used in spoken word order
- Developed to support hearing impaired adults with an Intellectual Disability
- Expanded for use in a range of conditions including Autism Spectrum Disorders and intellectual disabilities
- Common place use in SEN schools, adult services for people with Autism and intellectual disability
Makaton

- Signs and symbols
Learn Makaton

- Good
- Bad
- Yes
- No
- Please
- Thank you
- Where
- Hello
- Goodbye
- How are you
Makaton: The Past

- Developed by Margaret Walker, Katherine Johnson and Tony Cornforth in 1970’s

- Original Paper published in 1974

- All subjects learnt to express some signs (36-137)

- All subjects displayed comprehension of signs taught (66-138)
Follow up information

- Patients able to use it as a complete medium for communication
- Integration of patients improved
- Reduction in challenging behaviour
- Individual sign in groups and amongst themselves
Summary

- Significant in terms of revolutionising communication with people with learning disabilities
- Aspirational quality improvement project
Communication Difficulties in People with Intellectual Disabilities

- People with intellectual disabilities all have delayed language development to some degree
- Some individuals never acquire speech
- Pass through the same developmental stages as normal children but at a slower rate
- Difficulties compounded by higher incidence hearing impairment, neuromuscular disorders and structural disorders
- Early studies suggested language development slower than would be predicted by IQ alone.
Communication Difficulties in People with Intellectual Disabilities

- Factors affecting language development:
  - Poor eye contact
  - Low motivation
  - High distractibility
  - Impaired cognition especially Short Term Memory
Communication Difficulties in People with Intellectual Disabilities

- Signing can promote communication:
  - Signed response is easier
  - Pairing sign with a word increases chance of communication success (positive feedback)
  - Overcome deficit in verbal labelling
Makaton Use in Autism

- **Carr (1979)**
  - 52 subjects
  - *almost all* make significant gains in their ability to use sign language.
  - Some children’s speech improves, but for many the output is negligible
Makaton use in Downs Syndrome

- **Le Prevost (1983)**
  - Pioneered the introduction of Makaton to Down’s Syndrome babies of ten months and under
  - Introduced forty signs from Stages 1 and 2 of Makaton to the mother of a ten month old Down’s Syndrome child.
  - At 36 months average developmental age for Speech and language in child with DS is 17.6 months.
  - Le Prevost Speech and language age was 25 months.
Makaton use in Intellectual Disability

- **Schaeffer et al (1978)**
  - Signing facilitates speech imitation by children with severe language deficits
  - Untapped expressive skills
  - Signing and speech may alleviate frustration and be more effective than signing alone
  - Makaton fosters spontaneous communication by children with severe language deficits
Learn Makaton

- Come
- Go
- More
- Finished
- Me
- You
- Mine
- Yours
- Toilet
- Help
Makaton use in the NHS

- References to Makaton in publications and research 2010-2015 – 43 studies
- 5 related to the NHS
  - Reasonable adjustments for people with learning disabilities: A survey of NHS Trusts
  - Six Trusts (6%) said that they provided training in Total Communication or Makaton
Use of Makaton in MHID Services

- Limited research but use is encouraged
  - Validates it as a communication
  - Promotes holistic communication and understanding
  - Promotes development of rapport
  - Promotes choice
Makaton in Wider Use

- Argument to suggest it is a life skill
- Moved beyond intellectual disabilities into the mainstream
Why Learn Makaton?
Why Learn Makaton?
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Why Learn Makaton?
Learn Makaton!

- Doctor
- Nurse
- Psychologist
- Mum
- Dad
- Granddad
- Grandma
- Brother
- Sister
- Friend
Makaton: Future Use in MHID

- Promoting consistency of use in specialist Intellectual Disability services
- Promoting use generally amongst health care professionals/trainees
- Use in people with Autism and Catatonia without an intellectual disability
- Use of information technology
Use of Makaton in Mental Health in Intellectual Disability Teams

- Successful use of signing requires communication partners need to have relevant training

- Chadwick and Jolliffe (2009) showed staff can learn a core sign vocabulary

- No automatic translation into use with people with an ID

- Embedding a signing culture might be more successfully achieved by training all staff in a service together.

- Pilot studies in South London and Maudsely MHID multidisciplinary teams
Use of Information Technology

- 71% of users saw an improvement in communication skills within 1 month
- 95% of users agreed that communication increased between them and the person they support
- 92% of users agreed that MyChoicePad has increased the independence of the person they support

Mychoicepad social impact study (2015)
Learn Makaton

- Biscuit
- Cake
- Food/eat
- Drink
- Coffee
- Tea
- Chocolate
- Dinner
- Sausages
- Chips
Summary

- Good research to show sign language benefits people with ID
- Makaton underused in MHID services and NHS as a whole
- Scope for MHID staff to learn the sign language
- Argument suggest life skill for all NHS staff
- Core signs can be easily learnt by staff teams; need to develop ways to sustain use.
Recap

- How many signs do you remember....
Questions?
Additional References

