The Use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication Methods with Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities: A Research Review

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Purpose
The purpose of this paper is to review existing research focusing on use of augmentative and alternative communication interventions with infants and toddlers.

The Article
Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) helps individuals with reduced communicative competence. AAC use for infants and toddlers is important because the foundations of later brain development are established during these early years. However, most research on AAC use focuses on older individuals. In this paper 12 research studies involving 190 participants age three and younger were reviewed. A variety of AAC systems were used successfully and improved communication for participants. Children with various disabilities were able to improve communication through the use of AAC systems. Using AAC methods allowed communication partners to create more communicative opportunities. Both clinicians and parents should be aware that a variety of AAC methods can be effective with infants and toddlers and should be explored as early as possible.

What this Means for the Field
This systematic review was designed to identify the evidence base for using augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems with infants and toddlers. It also recognized gaps in research literature concerning the use of AAC systems with children under that age of three. The analysis of existing research studies indicates that AAC methods can be used effectively with infants and toddlers with disabilities. Further research is needed concerning the use of AAC systems prior to the age of three, especially the functional use of AAC methods during daily routines. The use of AAC methods with infants and toddlers will facilitate early learning experiences that can promote the child's further development.

Citation

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