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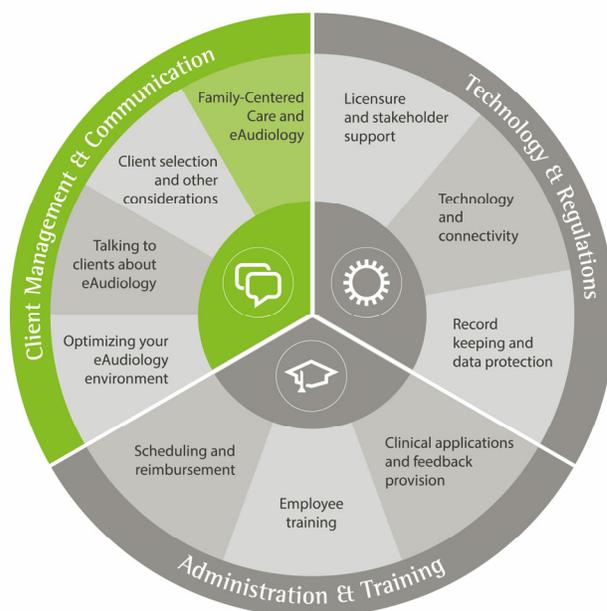
ABCs of eAudiology

10 steps to Family-Centered Care for eAudiology

No. 9, by Joseph Montano, Ed.D.

Family-centered care (FCC) and eAudiology are the perfect match. We already know evidence has shown that outcomes improve when family members are involved with hearing health related services. Therefore, since eAudiology efforts are increasing rapidly throughout the fields of audiology and hearing instrument industries, would it not then, seem logical that a combination of both these offerings would best serve our patients with hearing loss? The widespread availability of eAudiology technologies makes the inclusion of family in all aspects of the auditory rehabilitation process a present reality.

It is simple, it does not require advanced technological skill, it is commonly accessible and it makes sense. Here are ten steps to get you started on the road to implementing FCC in your practice using everyday technology systems.



Where to start?

Step 1 - Buy In

Develop an FCC philosophy within your practice. Get everyone involved in the process; all professional and clerical staff. Once you get buy in from your employees, the rest is easy.

Step 2 - Get equipped

It is likely that your practice already has the necessary equipment to begin the FCC/eAudiology process. Hearing aid manufacturers now provide products and services to connect with your patients remotely. Typically however, these services can be set up using standard Wi-Fi or mobile data with smart phones, tablets or computers using already available software such as FaceTime, WhatsApp, and Skype, even without the need for complex Information Technology (IT) intervention.

Step 3 - Make the appointment

When scheduling appointments, have your staff encourage the patient to invite family to attend. Let them explain the benefit of having family involved in the process. Be ready to provide solutions when the patient identifies problems such as:

My son works and cannot attend the appointment; My daughter lives two hours away; My husband is out of town.

Step 4 - Ask the patient who they would like to participate

If the patient is agreeable to including family into their audiology appointments, find out who they would like to bring. Will they be able to attend in person? If not, suggest that virtual attendance is possible.

Step 5 - Explain virtual family participation

Let your patient know that if their family member is able to use a smart phone or tablet, they can be invited to attend the session and be present using readily available software programs. Be ready to explain the process.

Step 6 - Get family contact information

Ask your patients to provide the names and contact information for the people they would like to include in their appointment.

Step 7 - Contact the family members or friends suggested by the patient

Contact the person / persons recommended by your patient and explain the importance of FCC, inviting them to participate in the appointment. Try to arrange an appointment time that will be as inclusive as possible.

Step 8 - Determine the family/friend's preferred method of video conferencing

Ask what software they have accessible, type of mobile phone (Apple/Android) comfort with the technology and alternative means of contacting them should any problems arise. If video conferencing is not possible, the use of a speaker-phone can still include them into the process.

Step 9 - Prepare the room

Set up the appointment room in a comfortable manner allowing for easy communication (perhaps around a circular table) and easy viewing of the video source. Try to arrange viewing of as many people as possible in the room.

Step 10 - Greet your patient and welcome them and the family into the appointment.

Once your patient has arrived, telephone the virtual family member to confirm their availability. Welcome your patient, escort them to the office, contact the family, allow for greetings and introduction and begin your auditory rehabilitation.

Are you up to the challenge?

If you follow these ten simple steps, you could be providing FCC and eAudiology services tomorrow. So, try it. Undoubtedly, you already have the technology and the software is likely an app already on your phone or tablet. So, arrange for an office meeting today and get your staff on-board. Schedule your first FCC consult and you will quickly realize the benefit for your patients, your practice and yourself.

Author



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