How Do I Implement Family-centered Care in My Practice?

Tips for overcoming obstacles to family-centered care in a busy practice

By BETTINA TURNBULL, MAud

For some time, we have heard about Person-centered Care and its extension – Family-centered Care. Many hearing care professionals have attended lectures and workshops and love the idea, but have questions about implementation. Is it going to take longer? How do I get a family member to attend the initial consultation? How do I get my support staff involved? Will it cost our practice more? These are some of the valid questions that this article addresses.

How do I get other hearing care professionals (HCPs) in my practice to embrace family-centered care (FCC)?

Any change can cause a variety of reactions—ranging from enthusiasm to deep cynicism—and there are likely to be some set-backs along the way. Figure 1 shows common stages when a change occurs. Implementing FCC into your practice not only requires a change in attitude (most clinicians tend to have quite a positive attitude to FCC) but a change in behavior, and that can be a challenge. We are by nature creatures of habit and it can be quite demanding, even for an enthusiastic advocate, to change what they do.¹

A plan for implementing FCC might look like this:

1. **If your business is big enough to have managers, get them on board.**

   If management does not support the change to FCC, it is unlikely to succeed. Developing a clear reason for why is crucial. The Phonak position statement on FCC by Singh, Hickson, English et al² is a good tool to assist in getting the conversation started.

2. **Find out who your early adopters are.**

   Early adopters tend to be excited by new things, and are likely to try out new things first. Be sure to brief them well and practice with them. Ensure your early adopters have all the support they need to succeed so that their enthusiasm continues and rubs off on those who are more reluctant.

3. **Communication is key.**

   Develop a communication plan for your practice about FCC. Communicate often and keep it simple.

4. **Provide training (including for support staff) and allow time for practice.**

   This allows HCPs to ask questions and discuss options. The dreaded role-play is gold.

5. **Identify and accept barriers to successful implantation and collaborate to find the best solutions.**

   For example, room size or set up could be a barrier to successful FCC. More potential barriers are discussed below.

6. **Provide support and share success stories.**

   Support ways in which HCPs can share their successes. This could be informally in the lunch room or via a pin board, email, newsletter, etc. The options are endless.

**Does a FCC Approach Make the Appointment Longer?**

This is a common question and is a little like asking, *How long is a piece of string?* It depends on how long you take. It is not about spending more time, but spending your time more effectively. By using a motivational counseling approach, the conversation will yield deeper understanding of your client’s and the family’s communication needs, more effective trust building, and a fantastic platform for an ongoing partnership throughout the hearing journey.

Traditionally, HCPs are taught that the client medical history is the chief instrument for building rapport with the client. Good family-centered counseling yields a much richer foun-

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¹ As reported in the November 6, 2015 Hearing Review online news, Phonak has convened a select group of hearing healthcare experts to provide evidence-based recommendations to hearing care providers on how to better engage family members. Chaired by Dr Louise Hickson, the objective of this group is to facilitate family involvement throughout the hearing remediation process. This paper is part of a series of papers about family-centered care that have been supported by the Phonak Expert Circle. It will address some misconceptions and answer questions asked by many who are interested in changing to a family-centered counseling model and suggest some ideas for implementing change in your practice.

True or False: the best way to establish rapport is to use a closed question format.
Conclusion

Implementing change is never easy, however, with planning, good communication and an open mind to overcoming challenges along the way, the outcomes for clients, their families, and the rewards for the HCP, are well worth the effort.

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References


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