

**Article:** Patient Communication in Health Care Settings: new Opportunities for Augmentative and Alternative Communication

**Authors:** Sarah W. Blackstone & Harvey Pressman

**Key Points:**

- An important part of health care is communication between patients and their providers.
- Many people who use AAC devices feel like they don't have good enough communication with their doctors.
- It is important that doctors, device users, educators, and researchers work together to improve health communication for device users.

**Glossary:**

AAC devices: augmentative and alternative communication devices

Health communication: written, verbal, and nonverbal strategies to make decisions that affect our health

**Why this article matters:**

Device users are a vulnerable population in healthcare settings because the medical system is not set up well.

Doctors aren't trained on how to communicate with device users. The current healthcare system is not always flexible to support device users.

Good communication between doctors and patients is important for good health. Doctors need training on how to better communicate.

Device users would benefit from training on how to advocate for their own needs in healthcare, too.

**Purpose of this Article:**

1. How can healthcare providers better help patients who have communication challenges or use AAC devices?
2. What supports do people who use devices need to communicate in healthcare settings in the future?

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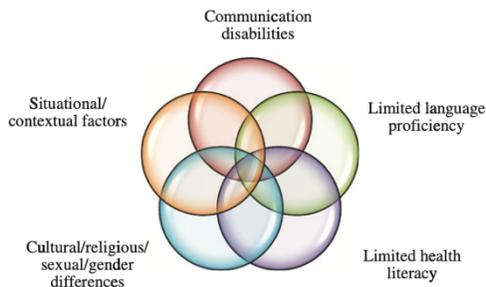


Figure 1. Communication-vulnerable patient groups and converging risk factors. Adapted from Blackstone (2015). © 2016 Sarah W. Blackstone. All Rights Reserved.

### **Important Results:**

This picture shows different risk factors that device users face in healthcare. All these factors overlap and show why device users are a vulnerable group in healthcare settings.

The article gave some suggestions for making healthcare better for device users. These recommendations are:

1. Using plain language in all signs and documents. Pictures would be helpful, too.
2. Communication displays can be used to allow people to respond. For example: nurses in hospitals use yes/no questions or markers on whiteboards to let patients respond.
3. Doctors should have more training on how to communicate well with device users and other people with communication challenges.
4. Medical passports can be helpful to say important information. For example: "I use an AAC device. I have a care partner who is here but please ask me questions about my health."
5. AAC devices or other communication boards can be updated before planned procedure. For example: if someone is going to have surgery, an OT or speech therapist can help the self-advocate add functions to their board that would be useful in the hospital.

### **How the results will be used:**

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1. These results can be used to help doctors know how to better treat device users.
2. These results can be used for device users to advocate for changes with their doctor.

Device users can even send these results to their doctors to educate them.