ATTUNING.
A theory of communication of people with profound intellectual and multiple disability.

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Aim of the Presentation.

- To present a theory that explains the process by which people with profound intellectual and multiple disability and others communicate.
Communication characteristics of people with PIMD.

- Limited receptive and expressive communication.
- The absence of functional receptive language and the presence of non-symbolic communication is regarded as one of the indicative characteristics of people with PIMD (Nakken and Vlaskamp 2007)
Communication characteristics of people with PIMD 2.

- Expressive communications are idiosyncratic and non-verbal.
- Expressive communications consist of facial expressions, body movements and vocalisations (Stephenson and Dowrick 2005), gestures (McLean et al. 1999), body direction, eye gaze and actions (Bradshaw 2001).
Staff communication forms.

- **Staff tend to talk.**
- **Staff working with this group of people make plentiful use of verbal communications and complex language in their interactions (Bradshaw 2001).**
Communication is two-way.

- Communication may be regarded as dyadic, co-created by both partners and a *continuous process* of perception and action (Fogel 1993).
Effective communication.

- **Mutuality.**
  - The dyadic communication process is most successful when communication partners engage in joint attention and the participation is built upon mutual understanding. (Wilder and Granlund 2003).

- **Responsive Environment.**
  - Recognition that the dyad provides a responsive environment that operates to regulate communication processes may in itself assist the development of dyadic communication for people with profound intellectual and multiple disability (Stephenson and Dowrick 2005).
The study aimed to develop a theoretical framework to explain the interaction process between people with profound intellectual and multiple disability and others with whom they interact.
Methodology

- Data collection.
- 3 x 1 hour video recordings of person with PIMD and key worker.
- Key episodes transcribed into detailed narrative framework. [Eggins and Slade (1997) and West (1996)].
- Each behaviour transcribed in the sequence in which it occurred.
- Data analysis using classic grounded theory [Glaser 1998].
The Theory: Attuning.

- Is concerned with mutual empathy and cooperation between two communicators. Attuning is the key generator of communication as well as being the measure by which the communication process is calibrated.
Attuning defined.

“A process that can be bilateral or multi dimensional, whereby communication partners move symmetrically or asymmetrically towards each other cognitively and emotionally.”
7 concepts.

- Attuning [the core concept]
- Being.
- Setting.
- Attention.
- Engagement
- Action.
- Stimulus.
Attuning.
Attuning and Attention.
Environment affects the way people behave and communicate.

How people feel affects their actions and how they pay attention to what happens around them and how they engage and communicate.

The way in which communication takes place is determined by how a person attunes to another.
The likelihood of a person attuning to another is determined by the environment, the person’s state of mind, the actions and stimuli that they encounter and how much attention they pay to these differential stimuli.
Attuning is two dimensional.

- **Empathy.**
  - The degree of comprehension and harmony between the individuals [pro-anti attuning].

- **Co-operation.**
  - The degree of co-operation between the individuals [positive-negative].
  - This results in a four pointed structure.
Example: code *refusal*.

- **Low cooperation but high empathy.**
- **Both partners are attuned to each other, they understand what the other wishes, however one or both do not accede to the other’s wishes.**
Some hypotheses.

- “It is possible for both communication partners to predict some future action within the dyad”.
- “A variable relationship exists between stimulus strength and the resulting action. Where a direction does manifest, the strength of the action is less than the strength of the stimulus”.
Note: Mandela [stimulus] and the lady to his right [action].
Implications.

- People with and without profound intellectual disability communicate in the same way but the manifestations of their communications differ.
- People with PIMD have the innate capacity to attune to others consistently and across multiple settings.
- Attuning [putting oneself in the mindset of the other] to others is the key process in communication.
Implications

- Understanding of the process can facilitate staff and relatives to communicate effectively with people with PIMD.
- And also to facilitate the person with PIMD to express him/herself and enable the person to achieve a level of autonomy, which is best achieved in the context of an interdependent relationship with others [Brown et al 1998].
And finally ......
References.

References 2.