Applied Behavior Analysis and Speech Language Pathology Interprofessional Practice to Support Autistic Children with Complex Communication Needs

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Abstract : In this paper, a speech-language pathologist (SLP) and Board Certified Behavior Analysts® (BCBA) with a combined professional experience of almost 50 years will discuss their experiences working with individuals on the autism spectrum. Some autistic children require augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) to meet their communication needs. These learners present with unique strengths and challenges, often requiring intervention from a team of professionals to generalize skills across environments. Collaboration between SLPs and BCBAs will be discussed in terms of strengths and challenges. Applied behavior analysis (ABA) will be defined and explained in the context of the treatment of learners on the autism spectrum with complex communication needs (CCN). The requirement for collaboration will be discussed by the governing boards for both BCBAs and SLPs. The strengths of each discipline will be compared along with difficulties faced when professionals experience disciplinary centrism. The challenges in teaching autistic learners with CCN will be reviewed. Case studies will be shared in which BCBAs and SLPs engage in interprofessional practice to support autistic children who use AAC to participate in a social skills group. Learner outcomes will be shared and assessed through both an SLP and BCBA perspective. Finally, ideas will be provided to promote the interprofessional practice, including establishing a shared framework, avoiding professional jargon and moving towards common terminology, and focusing on the data to ensure the efficacy of treatment.
Keywords : autism, cross disciplinary collaboration, augmentative and alternative communication, generalization
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