

THE ISAAC COMMUNICATOR

June 2021

Message from the ISAAC President

Juan Bornman

Dear ISAAC-Family,

In a world still dominated by discussions around vaccines and COVID-19, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Yet, many of us are feeling that we are just at the end of our rope...

A rope is made up of strands that can be thick or thin, short or long, that are all intertwined to become stronger and stronger! A rope has a beginning, and it has an end. It can twist, stretch, form links and carry heavy loads. It can be used to measure and to guide. Or it can become totally knotted and entangle us – creating have nots, can nots, will nots, and do nots in our minds and hearts. It is so easy for these 'nots' to find a home in our lives which lead us to believe the 'am nots' that obstruct our lives and hold us back from becoming who we were created to be.

Mindfulness practice is when we take the time to sit down and untie these knots. At these times we will recognize what the (k)nots are, where we are tied to them, and where we are bound by them. I also see rope as a symbol of how,

...continued on page 2



Inside this issue

[From the Executive
Director](#)
Page 3-5

[News](#)
Page 6-8

[ISAAC Connect](#)
Page 9-12

[PWUAAC Online Chats](#)
Page 13

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Augmentative and Alternative Communication

Message from the ISAAC President ...continued

as part of the ISAAC family, our joint passion and focus on the different components that make up augmentative and alternative communication, whether it be in practice, policy, research or simply our voices, come together. Similarly to the rope, we at ISAAC are made up of different pieces from all over the world who feel bound together. COVID-19 has collectively taught us that when our circumstances change, as they will, some ties should be made in such manner that they can be untied again, quickly and effortlessly. These are the times when we need to re-think, re-imagine, and re-design.

“How do we tighten our bonds as the ISAAC family, yet keep them loose enough to prosper in a time such as this?”

Legend has it that when confronted with the Gordian Knot, Alexander the Great solved the problem by thinking outside the box – hence the metaphor "cutting the Gordian knot". I believe that with the **ISAAC Connect Virtual Event** – the global AAC community has also cut the Gordian COVID knot! At this conference you can expect more options with the exciting opportunity to select your own

choices. The digital platform provides the chance to listen to **all** the presentations, not only the ones you can physically attend. During this time when we still cannot travel, this digital event allows people from all around the world to engage at a time, place and pace each one of us finds comfortable.

Although it is not replacing our face-to-face conference **in Cancun in 2022**, our members have a growing appreciation for opportunities that have been made possible by technology and the potential for keeping the global AAC community linked together, because together we are all stronger.

In the end, we need to balance the meaning and context of the knots and their purpose, when they should be tied or untied and when they should be tight or loose. We need to acknowledge that knots can be both constructive and limiting.

As Winnie the Pooh said, “Don’t give up.... If the rope breaks ... try another piece of rope.”

Therefore, for the remainder of 2021, may we all have enough rope!

Juan

Juan Bornman

ISAAC President 2020 -2022


From the Executive Director

Franklin Smith

Welcome to the June 2021 edition of The ISAAC Communicator.

Could it be? Could it be true that in some countries and regions around the world, vaccination rates and transmissibility of COVID-19 are improving to the point where we can start looking forward to a return of some form of normalcy? Or are we going to be seeing more “ups and downs”, as more aggressive variants take hold?

These are important questions we are all asking. Yet no country has been spared the effects of the pandemic, and within each country the impact has been felt unevenly. For ISAAC, we also have to be cognizant of the impact of the pandemic on people who use AAC, their family members and personal support networks, as well as those in our community who have been working on the healthcare “front lines”. These groups have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, first in terms of access to health care and home-based attendant services and, most recently, by the need for many to secure access to the vaccines that are making a difference around the world.

We applaud the actions of those <<<  within the AAC and ISAAC communities who are continuing to make a difference under these devastating circumstances. And we remain hopeful that we will all be able to get together, in-person, as soon as possible. In the meantime....

ISAAC Connect

ISAAC is thrilled to announce our **first ever** fully virtual event, ISAAC Connect, taking place between August 9th

And August 12th, 2021. We already have [many highly esteemed AAC Researchers and Clinicians confirmed as speakers and presenters](#). We are also thrilled that the US-based National Institutes of Health (NIH) is supporting our [ISAAC Connect Masterclasses](#)!



Online registration for ISAAC Connect is [NOW OPEN](#). For the month of July, we're offering a **special deal** to some of our key stakeholder groups. People who use AAC, their family members, people who are from developing countries, students, or retired persons with an active 2021 ISAAC membership can register for the event for only **CAD\$139!**

In addition to the high-quality scientific programming, ISAAC Connect will feature sponsored sessions, social events, a film

...continued on page 4

From the Executive Director ...continued

festival, and an opportunity to tour our virtual Exhibit Hall and speak directly with our exhibitors and sponsors.

The entire ISAAC Connect leadership team is hard at work to ensure that ISAAC Connect is THE “not to miss” event of the AAC calendar in 2021!

ISAAC Publications Specialist

I am thrilled to introduce the ISAAC worldwide community to [Chloe Leon](#), who recently joined ISAAC International as our very first Publications Specialist! Chloe will be taking over editing and writing responsibilities for The ISAAC Communicator, the annual Membership Directory, as well as the CSWN newsletter, from our very own [Heather Stonehouse](#). This change reflects the necessity of ensuring an efficient and effective staff resource allocation for these important publications, while also ensuring we maintain focus on all of the other important aspects of our ongoing communication efforts.

Chloe is a second year student pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree at Toronto’s Ryerson

Messages from ISAAC’s President and Executive Director are available in French, Italian, and Portuguese translation on our [website](#).

University, studying both media production and journalism. She has already shown herself to be a valuable addition to the ISAAC team, by effectively diving in and doing a superb job on her first assignment, the May 2021 edition of the [CSWN newsletter](#).

I know you will all join me in welcoming Chloe to the ISAAC team!

ISAAC Webinars

We continue to see positive feedback to our recently announced changes to our ISAAC webinar platform.

ISAAC International is now pleased to offer access to webinars via both GoToWebinar and Zoom platforms. The addition of Zoom provides access to auto captioning functionality, to improve our capacities around communication access.

ISAAC International recently held an important [Data Privacy and Security for AAC](#) webinar, featuring a “dream team” panel of six (6) top experts in the field.

Our US and Canadian chapters (USSAAC and ISAAC-Canada) continue to provide excellent programming, and we thank them for their ongoing support and commitment, especially during these challenging times. Our Spanish language group, ISAAC Español, has also “taken the plunge” with their own ...continued on page 5



From the Executive Director ...continued

programming, as has our LEAD Committee, chaired by Kevin Williams. Members are encouraged to check out our [Member-only webinar archive area](#) in addition to our [public facing webinar archive area](#).

Thanks to all for their time and energy, and let me once again issue my challenge to all our other Chapters, related groups and sponsors around the world – the ISAAC webinar platforms (GoToWebinar and Zoom) are available for your use, to present interesting and timely AAC-related content.

Simply send me an [email](#), and let's get the webinar ball rolling!

Membership Directory 2021

A big thanks to our [Carol Silverberg](#), who is working hard on behalf of all members, in ensuring accurate and timely processing of our membership information!

2021 is shaping up to be another excellent membership year for ISAAC, and our team is now working hard to make sure this year's Membership Directory will be another success. We are thrilled with the response so far with 2021 membership renewal!

If you are an ISAAC member through one of our other Chapters who manage their own membership, please contact your Chapter

directly to inquire about 2021 membership



ISAAC Council and Executive Board Leadership

Our ISAAC Council and Executive Board leadership are both taking very active roles, in a number of key areas.

Our Council Chair and Chair-Elect, Nadia Browning (Canada) and Signhild Skogdal (Norway), are both active in a number of international initiatives all aimed at generating greater awareness for the field of AAC. These initiatives are ensuring that the ISAAC Council has an effective and efficient role within ISAAC's governance structure, and are solidifying ISAAC's leadership position within the field of AAC.

Our Executive Board members are all fully engaged in the many different projects currently underway and, in particular, both our LEAD and BUILD committees continue to be as active as they have ever been. Congratulations to all involved!

As always, I welcome your thoughts and feedback. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly, at franklin@isaac-online.org, should you require any further information or assistance.

Regards and thanks,

Franklin Smith

ISAAC Executive Director

News



Communication Matters (ISAAC-UK)



Communication
Matters
more than just talking

Communication Matters Virtual Conference

The Communication Matters International AAC Conference is the UK's leading annual AAC event. Over the course of five half days online, participants will enjoy a diverse programme of keynotes, plenaries, presentations, posters and talks from AAC supplier companies.

We have been advised that sadly it will not be possible to have any face-to-face element of the Communication Matters conference again this September. This is a huge disappointment, but the decision has been made with the safety of everyone involved in mind. What this does mean is that we have six months to plan a fantastic virtual event and we will aim, like The CM Sessions from 2020, to give you all a feel for the CM conference you have come to love!

The conference provides a unique forum to meet and exchange information with representatives from all disciplines

Associated with Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), including AAC users, parents, personal assistants, professionals and suppliers of AAC equipment. Communication Matters encourages and supports AAC users to attend.

This year's conference will be held virtually with help from MEETinLEEDS at the University of Leeds. You can be sure we will include some social sessions, sessions lead by some of the UK's leading suppliers of AAC products, and opportunities to learn from others about inventive ways of supporting AAC users and families.

The conference will run over five half days from **Monday, September 13th to Friday, September 17th**. We are aiming to welcome over 400 attendees to the conference, which will include 60+ presentations, social events and more.

Registration is **now open** and members of ISAAC chapters or ISAAC International receive half-price registration to the virtual conference.

You can register here:

<https://eu.eventscloud.com/website/4800/registration/>

... Chapter News continues on page 7

News

... continued



Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication – Pretoria, South Africa

Please read about this exciting research project and find links to open access papers from Dr. Ensa Johnson, colleagues, and postgraduate students.

The project, '**Shared Decision-Making in a Multicultural Society: Supporting Children with Cancer with Symptom Management**', funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF), Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT) and the South African Swedish University Forum (SASUF) aims to enable all children with cancer and/or with communicative disabilities to communicate their symptoms.

As such, the mHealth tool, PicPecc was developed to enable children to communicate their symptoms such as pain, anxiety, fear, nausea, appetite, sleep and feelings. For the South African context, the PicPecc tool was translated from English into isiZulu, Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana, Tshivenda, Tsonga and Afrikaans.

Please feel free to read the latest publications (open access):

- Supporting communication vulnerable children to communicate their pain.
https://www.researchgate.net/.../344972550_Supporting...
- The Children's Action-Reaction Assessment Tool (CARAT) as an observational tool for assessing symptom management: An initial validation study with children aged 3-7 years undergoing needle procedures.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jspn.12334>
- A systematic review of self-report instruments for the measurement of anxiety in hospitalized children with cancer.
<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/18/4/1911>
- Evaluating pictorial support in person-centred for children (PicPecc) – A protocol for a crossover design study.
<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/11/5/e042726>
- Being heard – moving from professional-centred to person-centred paediatric care using augmentative and alternative communication as universal design: A position-paper.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1/nin.12426>



... Chapter News continues on page 8

News

... continued



Feasibility studies are in progress with children (aged 8;00 to 17;11) who are first-language speakers in the eight languages (English, isiZulu, Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana, Tshivenda, Tsonga and Afrikaans) to determine children's opinion about the features in the PicPecc app. An online survey on Internet availability for these participants will also be done. If you are interested in getting access to the PicPecc app and participating in this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Ensa Johnson at ensa.johnson@up.ac.za. Healthcare staff working with paediatric patients can also contact Dr. Johnson should they be interested to give input on the app.

Additionally from the Centre for AAC, kindly see a published article by Miss Morwane, Prof Dada and Prof Bornman. The publication formed part of Miss Morwane's PhD study:

https://ajod.org/index.php/ajod/article/view/833?fbclid=IwAR1IZYywrluJz79GWB4Y_DUGFUW4IG4hoEWe_X0eewaS1MDQ8QeS5hfrPc



University of Pretoria

Google Project Euphonia

[Project Euphonia](#) is a Google Research initiative focused on helping people with alternative communication needs to communicate with others.

The approach is centered on analyzing speech recordings to better train speech recognition models. Face-to-face communication can be challenging for people who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). Using voice-activated technologies can be frustrating, too. While tools like Google Home or the Google Assistant can help people call someone, adjust lighting, or play a favorite song, they may not work as well for those with alternative speech.

Though speech recognition algorithms have heard millions of examples of words and phrases, the algorithms have not heard nearly as many examples from people with alternative speech.

If you're 18-years-of-age or older and have an alternative way of speaking, you can assist Google's research on Project Euphonia by recording a set of phrases in exchange for a gift card here:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeu8eBOUwzs7PdH25v4ITXjzOVO8rfmfNloUovLForMmYRipA/viewform>.

ISAAC Connect



Connect and Collaborate in August 2021

ISAAC Connect, our first-ever virtual event, is happening from August 9th to 12th. This unique e-learning opportunity will be live and interactive online, with sessions recorded for later viewing so you don't have to miss a thing.

Our goal: To ensure you are able to connect with the most recent research, industry developments and key contributors to move your efforts and solutions forward.

Sign up for ISAAC Connect [here](#). Register soon for best available rates!

The registration process is easy and fast:

HOW TO REGISTER

- MEMBER DISCOUNT**
 Log into Member only page at <https://isaac-online.org/> to access your member discount code
- SYSTEM SETTINGS**
 Java Script **MUST** be enabled on your device
 Use the latest version of Google Chrome
- REGISTER**
 Register at <https://events.eply.com/ISAAC-Connect>. Members must input their member ID and member discount code
- CONFIRMATION**
 You will receive confirmation of your paid registration within 24 hours

You don't want to miss this.

ISAAC Connect is offered on an easy-to-use interactive platform, featuring sessions with insights into the evolving trends in AAC. We have an exciting lineup of speakers, themes, and topics ... plus a short film festival and social events. You can visit our virtual Exhibit Hall and have the opportunity to engage with our exhibitors and sponsors, too.

Stay on track.

It's understandable that keeping current may have taken a back seat over the past year due to the COVID-19 public *health emergency* of international concern. We are all craving face-to-face contact, which is not yet possible for so many of us. It is more important now than ever before to find ways to come together to drive momentum for advancements in AAC until we meet again at the next ISAAC Conference.

AUGUST 9 - 12, 2021

CONNECT AND COLLABORATE IN 2021

- Robust Program**
Discovery
- NIH Sponsored Masterclasses**
Exploration
- NIH Sponsored Interactive Sessions**
Interaction
- Short Film Festival**
Inspiration
- Town Hall Meeting**
Unity
- Exhibit Floor**
Collaboration
- ePosters**
Dissemination
- Social Events**
Connection

ACCESSIBILITY FRIENDLY
 ISAAC is committed to making its online learning events and meetings accessible for people who have disabilities and who may or may not use AAC.
ASHA CEUS AVAILABLE

ISAAC Connect ... continued



Here's what we have to offer:

- Four days to learn and interact with AAC experts – both people who use AAC and professionals in the field. Our [confirmed topics and speakers](#) is growing every day. Speakers and panels will offer presentations and interactive sessions. Eposters will encourage interaction and the exchange of ideas.
- Takeaway resources for people who use AAC and their families, students, teachers, therapists, researchers, and organizations.
- At the ISAAC Connect [Town Hall Meeting](#), people who use AAC will have a chance to share experiences as the world steadily recovers from the pandemic. Anyone who uses AAC is invited to participate and will be given priority to speak over those with typical speaking methods. This means people who use AAC who attend ISAAC Connect can share ideas, a laugh and, most importantly, time with each other. Two chats are being planned so that you can join in a time zone that works for you.

- "Connecting Through Visual Storytelling" is the theme of the ISAAC Connect [Short Film Festival](#). Submitted entries will be created and produced with people who use AAC as the lead filmmakers.
- Social events, for example [Beer and Coffee Around the World](#), offer a chance for you to meet others and have fun!
- Our virtual Exhibit Hall, featuring the latest advancements in AAC to energize your work and home life. You will be able to interact with companies from around the world in real-time.

We're looking forward to meeting with you this August! Full details are available on the [ISAAC Connect](#) website.



... ISAAC Connect continues on page 11

ISAAC Connect <<<

North American Alliance for Communication Access (NAACA)

The North American Communication Access Alliance (NAACA) was created in response to ISAAC's call for proposals to support effective communication access at the ISAAC 2020 Biennial Conference in Cancún, Mexico. The NAACA partnership includes leaders from CATIC in Mexico, USSAAC, Communication Disability Access Canada and ISAAC Canada.

As everyone knows, due to the global pandemic, the ISAAC 2020 conference has been postponed to 2022. At this time, ISAAC is gearing up to host its first ever virtual, global event taking place between August 9th and August 12th, 2021.

Responding to this new online format, NAACA has developed accessibility guidelines to ensure that people who use AAC, family members, allies and clinicians can equally and fully participate and contribute at ISAAC's virtual events.



Details are available on the ISAAC Connect site at: <https://isaac-online.org/english/isaac-connect/communication-access/>

NAACA recommends:

- Using an online meeting / learning platform that provides a range of accessibility options such as captioning, typing, chat box, and keyboard equivalents for functions such as mute / unmute.
- Asking registrants to identify any accessibility needs they may have beyond what the platform already provides.
- Providing or negotiating how these accessibility needs can be addressed.
- Providing technical support to access virtual events.
- Assigning a person to read aloud typed messages when indicated by ROL (read out loud) in the chat box (if using).
- Referring moderators, presenters and participants to the ISAAC site for information about hosting accessible virtual events.
- Providing handouts in accessible formats.
- Including a question about accessibility on evaluation form.
- Providing a phone-in/ listen option for participants who cannot access the online platform.

ISAAC Connect ... continued



Suggested script that moderators can customize when hosting virtual events on Zoom:

“As the moderator for this event, I want to point out some accessibility options so that ALL attendees can participate on an equal basis during this session. The keyboard equivalents for these features are available at: [Hot keys and keyboard shortcuts – Zoom Help Center](#)

Captioning: To turn on and off captioning: Click here on “Live transcript” and then click here on “Show subtitle”

Questions Box: To ask a question or comment which will be read aloud at the appropriate time to the presenters and the group: Click here on the “Question box” and type in your question/comment.

Chat Box: We will (or we will not) be monitoring the chat box. If we are using the Chat box, click here and type your message. Put ROL (Read Out Loud) after any items you want read aloud to the presenters and group. (Name) will be monitoring the chat box and reading comments/questions marked ROL at the appropriate time.

While these guidelines were developed for ISAAC, they may be useful when planning any virtual meeting or learning event.

We welcome your feedback and encourage you to translate and share these guidelines with your chapter and networks. Stay tuned for our coming informative video that will help you be better prepared for ISAAC Connect.

Contact NAACA at:
naacaforcommunicationaccess@gmail.com

Follow ISAAC Connect on social media for updates:

Facebook: [ISAAC Connect](#)

Instagram: [@isaac.connect](#)

Snapchat: [@isaacconnect](#)

Twitter: [@ISAAC AAC](#)

Chapters



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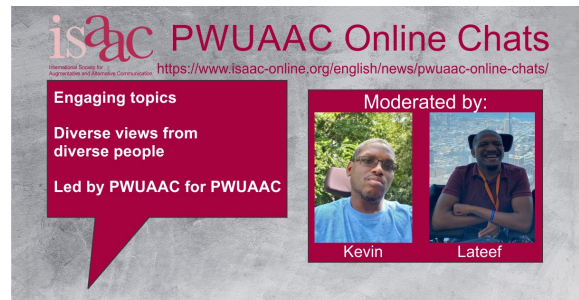
ISAAC-UK • www.communicationmatters.org.uk

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Contact Us

Do you have a question or comment?
Please feel free to send an email to
feedback@isaac-online.org

PWUAAC Online Chats



Visit [PWUAAC Online Chats](https://www.isaac-online.org/english/news/pwuaac-online-chats/) on the ISAAC website for information about the next scheduled chat.

ISAAC Webinars

As of January 2021, most ISAAC webinars and archived recordings are available as a benefit of membership, and accessed through the Members' Only portal. A limited number of [webinar recordings](#) will remain open to the public. Find out how to become an ISAAC member [here](#).



Our Vision & Mission



ISAAC's Vision is that AAC will be recognized, valued and used throughout the world.

ISAAC's Mission is to promote the best possible communication for people with complex communication needs.

ISAAC is a Non-Governmental Organization in consultative status with the United Nations Economic & Social Council.

Stay Connected

ISAAC Chapters and members worldwide are invited to submit items of interest from your country or region. News, AAC practice tips, research, personal essays, in article format or as a link to online articles or resources, will be reviewed and made available on the ISAAC website as appropriate. Please send articles and photos to [Nola Millin](#).

Stay Social

Stay in the loop! Follow ISAAC news & views in the AAC community on our social media!



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The ISAAC Communicator

Published four times each year. Comments welcome!
Please contact [Chloe Leon](#).

