**Abstract: Factors that enhance/inhibit a child with cerebral palsy to use switches for leisure and communication.**

Aim:

This paper aims to describes the factors that enhance/ inhibit children with severe cerebral palsy and complex communication needs to access switches for leisure and communication.

Method:
A qualitative methodology using semi-structured interviews was used with a purposive sample of eleven therapists.

Results:

*Theme 1: Child traits that affect how a child learns*

Switching activities need to promote success, be meaningful and motivating to the child. “It is important that the child sees that they are a learner, they have something to say in the world and they understand the purpose of switching and voice output and how it can help them”.

*Theme 2: Belief, philosophy and knowledge of therapists;*

Therapists should have open expectations that ‘kids with severe cognitive challenges can move on quite quickly from one switch to using two”.

*Theme 3: Supportive learning environments*

Parents are influential on successful outcomes and it is essential that “Once we’ve established a way that a child can be set up to use a switch at our centre, we make sure that the family have that exact same set up at home”.

*Theme 4: Complexities of learning to use switches and a speech-generating device*.
“Movement to access switches is not something that develops spontaneously, it needs to be ‘taught’ to many children”. It is essential to teach children language and communication in parallel, whilst learning the operational (motor) skills.

Conclusion
Supporting children with cerebral palsy and complex communication needs to access switches for leisure and speech-generating devices is a multi-layered and intricate process that takes time. Therapists require a large knowledge base about movement, communication and assistive technology in order to effectively support children and families.

**References**

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