

Complex Child E-Magazine

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Helping Our Kids Communicate Their Health Care Needs

by Randi Sargent

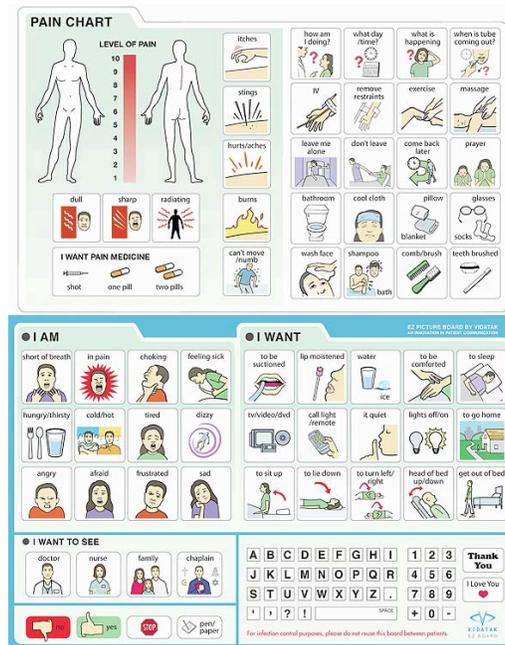
Helping the most vulnerable children and adult patients communicate during hospitalization or when receiving home care services is becoming a hot topic, which is a very good thing. Whether children are non-verbal prior to hospitalization or as a result of intubation or medication, hospital stays and procedures can be a scary experience for any child, and especially for a child who may not fully understand or be able to communicate reliably. Even care provided in the home environment can be frightening and challenging for children who cannot communicate their medical needs.

Thankfully, there are now several low-tech communication solutions that were specifically designed to help patients who are non-verbal or non-English speaking gain some control during their hospitalizations. These communication aids have been shown to reduce frustration and improve patient outcomes by reducing fear, pain and length of hospital stay. They can also be used in the home care setting to assist parents, home nurses, or respite care providers communicate with children.

Vidatak Picture Communication Board

Developed in collaboration with nurses at UCLA Medical Center, the Vidatak EZ Board is an evidence-based patient communication board designed by patients and supported by clinical research to improve patient satisfaction and improve patient outcomes. These word-based boards are available at many hospitals as a communication resource for patients who are unable to speak but able to read and point. They can also be purchased for about \$20 each if they are not available at your hospital. They are available in multiple languages.

Vidatak, in collaboration with the Augmentative Communication Program at Children's Hospital, Boston, has developed a second health care communication board based on picture symbols. For children who cannot read, these boards include symbols related to hospitalization, and provide a much-needed solution when staff are not available to create custom communication boards. Kids can point to the symbols or words to communicate if they are hot, cold, hungry, thirsty or want to watch TV or sleep.



Vidatak Picture Board

Greenhouse Publications Health Care Communication Boards

Health Care Communication Boards from Greenhouse Publications offer another symbol-based communication solution that was originally created by a speech pathologist for an ailing family member. This two-sided communication board contains 68 clear color pictures depicting wants, needs, ailments, comforts, questions, and emotions, as well as a pain scale for determining pain source and intensity. These boards feature drawings that are easy to understand and use, are well organized and are disposable for infection control. These can be purchased as laminated boards for about \$10 or in pads of 50 disposable sheets.

Thanks to clinical research, more and more hospitals are realizing that empowering patients who are non-verbal with communication options has a positive impact on the patient's outcome, while also reducing the cost of care. It is a win-win for all.

GP30
TOUCH FOR "NO"

NO

No = eyes closed

Greenhouse Publications

Health Care Communication Board

For Medical, Physical and Emotional Information

INSTRUCTIONS: Have patient touch pictures to request wants and needs.
If unable, caregiver touches pictures and gets yes/no response from patient.
Yes = thumbs up, nod, or eyes wide open;
No = thumbs down, nod or eyes closed.

TOUCH FOR "YES"

YES

Yes = eyes wide open

The board features several categories of icons:

- Medical Personnel:** DOCTOR, NURSE, MEDICINE (pill bottle and pills).
- Basic Needs:** EAT (plate, fork, knife), DRINK (bottle, glass), TOILET, URINAL.
- Physical Care:** TURN ME, WASH ME.
- Pain Scale:** A vertical scale from 0 to 10. 0 is labeled 'FINE' (green smiley), 5 is 'NOT SO GOOD' (yellow sad smiley), and 10 is 'AWFUL' (red angry smiley). Two human figures are shown for touch points.
- Emotional/Physical States:** HOT, COLD, CHEST PAIN, CAN'T BREATHE, CHOKING, SUCTION ME, NAUSEOUS, HEADACHE, DIZZY, ITCHY, BURNS, NUMB.

Greenhouse Health Care Communication Board

More Info:

Research: <http://www.vidatak.com/research.htm>

Vidatak: <http://www.Vidatak.com>

Greenhouse Publications: <http://www.greenhousepub.com>

These items and a selection of other similar items are available for families to purchase at SayitwithSymbols.com: <http://www.givinggreetings.com/medicalcare.html>

Randi Sargent is mom to Graham (13+ with cerebral palsy) and Liv (8). Graham uses assistive technology throughout his day for communication and mobility. She is a parent member of the AT Advisory Council of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commissions' MassMATCH program. Randi writes about assistive technology and AAC topics on her blog, <http://www.TheAdaptedLife.blogspot.com> and her website, www.SayitwithSymbols.com