

Communication Impairments Associated with Stroke

Acute Stroke Best Practices Workshop
“Advancing Best Practices in Acute Stroke Care”
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Purpose

- To provide staff with the skills and strategies necessary to communicate with people with communication disorders
- To limit patient and staff frustration
- To increase communication effectiveness, and to facilitate functional interaction



Types of Communication Impairments

<u>LANGUAGE</u>	<u>SPEECH</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Receptive Aphasia (Wernicke’s Aphasia) ▪ Expressive Aphasia (Broca’s Aphasia) ▪ Global Aphasia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Articulation ▪ Voice ▪ Fluency (stuttering) ▪ Apraxia



Receptive/Wernicke’s Aphasia

- Difficulty understanding spoken and/or written language
- Severity of the receptive aphasia can range from total inability to understand speech, to difficulty understanding complex, lengthy, or abstract information
- The message *going in*, isn’t clear to the patient
- Often there will be errors with what the patient says, but they will not notice or try to correct it (eg. “handmade silver hair quill” for comb)
- This is often referred to as a fluent aphasia



Expressive/Broca's Aphasia

- Difficulty for the client to speak and/or write
- Expressive aphasia can affect word finding ability and sentence structure
- Severity can range from mild word retrieval errors to the inability to produce anything verbally
- The patient will often sound like they are using “telegraphic” speech (um.....cold...blanket)
- This can be referred to a non-fluent aphasia



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Global Aphasia

- A combination of the receptive and expressive aphasias
- Most people with aphasia will fall in this category, since they often will have difficulties with understanding and expressing themselves



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INTELLIGENCE IS NOT AFFECTED

- Aphasia or dysphasia is a language impairment, NOT an intellectual dysfunction
- By becoming skilled conversational partners and better listeners, we can learn how to help the patient understand us better, and express themselves better



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How to help get your message *in*

- Use short sentences, simple grammar, common vocabulary
- Slow your rate of speech, add pauses in sentences
- Use your normal tone and loudness (they aren't 5, and they didn't lose their hearing!)
- Repeat and rephrase
- Give the patient time to process your information
- Use facial expressions, gestures, visual cues to add to your verbal information
- Write key words, draw diagrams or pictures
- Verify the message was understood



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How to help get their message *out*

- Ask Yes/No questions
- Ask closed ended questions (Do you want juice or milk? Vs. What do you want to drink?)
- Be patient.....give the patient extra time to answer you
- Encourage the patient to write, draw, or gesture to help express themselves
- Provide written or visual options for the patient to point to



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Writing Techniques

- Write down key words
- Make sure the patient can see it (are their glasses on, use large print, put it in their visual field)
- Talk naturally when you're writing, and ask "Where did you used to work?" and write WORK?



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Speech Disorders

- People with speech disorders know what they want to say, but have trouble saying it *clearly*
- Articulation – how the words sound, focusing on the individual sounds of the word
- Voice – how does the patient's voice sound (hoarse, strained, strangled, wet, etc.)
- Fluency – refers to stuttering, or how smoothly someone speaks



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Strategies to help some with Dysarthria

- Tell the patient at which point you did not understand
- Repeat what you did understand and have the patient finish *from that point*
- Ask the person to write the words you're having difficulty understanding (encourage them to use their non-dominant hand)
- Try using an alphabet board if the client is unable to write



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Articulation

- *Apraxia* affects the patient's articulation due to a muscle coordination problem
- *Dysarthria* affects the patient's articulation due to a muscle weakness, making their speech sound slurred



Experiencing Communication Disorders



Benefits of Skilled Conversation

- By using simple conversation strategies you can:
 - Facilitate the patient's participation in daily care activities
 - Help patients better understand what is being done and why
 - Help patients with communication difficulties feel more comfortable and help "give them a voice"

Everyone just wants to be heard



QUESTIONS?

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