



NSW Speech Pathology Evidence Based Practice Interest Group

Critically Appraised Paper (CAP)

CLINICAL BOTTOM LINE: Structured Group treatment immediately post individual therapy may have a significant effect on improving aphasia severity based on communicative and linguistic measures.

Clinical Question [patient/problem, intervention, (comparison), outcome]: Does supported conversation in groups maintain or improve communication skills following a CVA.

Search Terms:

Search Systems:

Citation: Elman, R.J. AND Bernstein- Ellis, E. The efficacy of group communication treatment in adults with chronic aphasia. *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research. 42(2): 411-9, April 1999.*

Design: Matched group design – a comparative case study with interrupted time series without a parallel control group

Participants: n=24. 24 individuals with chronic aphasia. All had a left CVA. All-80yrs or less and all >6month post. Severity: mild-severe. All had completed individual therapy and all passed exclusion criteria.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions - immediate treatment or deferred treatment. They were then assigned to either mild –mod or mod- severe aphasia group based on their initial aphasia severity as measured by the SPICA.

Experimental Group: n=12. A total of 4 months (32 sessions) of group communication therapy was provided – 5hrs weekly (2 ½ hr periods on 2 days). 80% minimum attendance rate required for inclusion. Therapy focused on conversational skills/initiating topics/expanding self-awareness of personal goals and providing confidence for communication attempts.

Control Group: n=12. Attended three or more hours weekly of social group activities of choice (church/movement classes) in order to control for the effect of social contact and to ensure that none of the participants were isolated. This group began therapy following completion of the experimental group's 4-month therapy trial.

Results: DT Group – Social interaction was not found to have a statistically significant effect prior to treatment on any measure.

IT Group – 12 individuals made significant changes - WAB and CADL scores were significantly higher than DT group.

More people made clinically significant changes than DT groups.. In addition significant increases were revealed after 2 months of therapy and after 4 months of therapy. No significant decline in performance occurred at time of follow up.

Comments on Design: : ? The validity of the definition of statistical significance.

Aphasia tests used to characterise the groups eg CADL and SPICA characterise the groups differently. Resources may limit clinical implications

Level of Evidence (NH&MRC): Level 3

Appraised By: Adult Dysphagia and Speech and Language
GP

Date: August 2003