

A Randomized Controlled Study Assessing the Effectiveness of Aphasia-Friendly Schedules on Therapy Attendance

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Background: Language-based barriers for a person living with aphasia are analogous to those living in inaccessible environments with physical impairments. Although stroke rehabilitation centres are physically accessible, they may not be as accessible to a person with aphasia. The purpose of this study was to compare the ability of clients with aphasia in an inpatient rehabilitation setting to independently attend therapy appointments when provided with a picture-based schedule, versus a traditional text-based schedule.

Methods: Parallel group design. Participants were randomized to either an experimental group (n=15) or a control group (n=12). Twenty seven participants with moderate to severe aphasia, as described by the Boston Diagnostic Aphasia Examination, were randomly assigned to a control group (text-only schedule) or an experimental group (picture and text schedule). Over the 15 day study period, therapists completed an attendance record for each participant. The primary outcome was the proportion of independently attended therapy sessions. Physical assistance by another person was accepted if directed by the participant.

Results: The effect of intervention was not significant ($F=2.02$, $p=.17$), and tended to favour the control group. Further analysis demonstrated that, independent of group condition, participants with severe aphasia attended fewer sessions independently (n=12; $M=0.66$, $SD=0.62$) than those with moderate aphasia (n=12; $M=0.92$, $SD=0.12$; $p=0.009$).

Conclusions: The results suggest that the addition of pictures to a text based therapy schedule did not significantly improve the participant's independent attendance to therapy sessions. Further supports may be required particularly for people with more severe aphasia.