

# Westman Aphasia Inc.

*Communication is more than 'just' words*

## *Some Facts About Aphasia*

### **WHAT IS APHASIA?**

Aphasia is a language or communication disorder that is a result of damage to parts of the brain responsible for language. Aphasia can occur suddenly following a stroke or head injury or it can develop slowly as the result of a brain tumor, a progressive disease of the brain or dementia.

### **FACTS ABOUT APHASIA**

- 35% of persons admitted to hospital with stroke have symptoms of aphasia on discharge
- 60% of patients with aphasia post-stroke have ongoing communication difficulties one year post-stroke (Pederson et al, 2004)
- 43% of patients who initially present with aphasia post-stroke are still significantly aphasic 18 months later (Laska et al)
- About 2000 strokes occur in Manitoba each year, with approximately 1000 in Winnipeg, directly (HSFManitoba, 2016)
- There are over 100,000 Canadians living with aphasia today
- Incidence of stroke and aphasia is increasing due to our aging population (Dickey, L., Kagan, A., Lindsay, MP;, Fang, J., Rowland, A;, Black, S., 2010)

### ***IMPACT OF APHASIA ON THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM***

The presence of aphasia is an independent predictor of: (Dickey et al, 2010)

- longer hospital stays
- increased use of rehabilitation services
- more frequent discharge to long term facilities (14% vs 7%)

### **IMPACT OF APHASIA ON QUALITY OF LIFE**

- High risk of social and emotional isolation
- Depression
- Aphasia-related abuse
- Reduced functional recovery
- Caregiver stress and illness
- Reduced access to healthcare information and social services

## APHASIA IS A FAMILY PROBLEM

People with aphasia and their families want . . .

(Worrall, October, 2010)

- On-going therapy and support
- Information
- Other people to understand aphasia
- To help others
- Hope and positivity from healthcare professionals

## SUPPORTED CONVERSATION FOR ADULTS WITH APHASIA (SCA™)

- Was developed by the Aphasia Institute in Toronto, Ontario
- “Talk is the main ingredient of healthcare.” Even the technical side of medicine depends on being able to talk to the affected person. (Roter and Hall, 1993)
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada Best Practice Recommendations for Stroke Care states that “all health care providers working with persons with stroke across the continuum of care should be trained about aphasia, including the recognition of the impact of aphasia and methods to support communication.” Also, “treatment to improve functional communication should include Supported Conversation techniques for potential communication partners of the person with aphasia.”
- Good communication practice improves health outcomes.
- Increasing communicative access to healthcare for the person with aphasia will affect quality of life after stroke, compliance with treatment as well as prevention of secondary stroke and knowing signs of stroke.
- SCA™ is not speech therapy. This is a communication approach that is taught to caregivers and healthcare providers. The focus is no longer on the spoken word, but on training the individuals in the person’s environment how to communicate differently or to ‘support’ their communication.
- One of the goals of training is to reduce the effect of aphasia so that we can increase access to healthcare and community resources.
- There is data available at the Aphasia Institute on the economics of how you can affect the financial bottom line by having healthcare providers trained in SCA™.
- We are currently the only organization in the province offering formal training in SCA™ to healthcare providers.

## REFERENCES & RESOURCES

Canadian Stroke Best Practice Recommendations: Stroke rehabilitation practice guidelines, update 2015, International Journal of Stroke 2016. Vol. 11(4) 459-484 Retrieved from: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1747493016643553>

Improving Your Compliance with Stroke Best Practice Across Settings and Professions: Canadian Best Practice Recommendations. Practical Methods to Reduce Language Barriers for Patients with Aphasia, Aura Kagan, January 19, 2017.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GioxutNQGYI>