

26th Annual Alzheimer Day

Communication Bridge: A person-centered Internet-based intervention for individuals with Primary Progressive Aphasia

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The diagnosis of primary progressive aphasia (PPA) is made when a relatively isolated progressive impairment of language occurs as a result of neurodegenerative disease. Although there are no pharmacological treatments for PPA, speech-language pathology (SLP) treatment can offer individuals with PPA a means to compensate for their communication difficulties. Unfortunately, individuals with PPA are under-referred for SLP treatment. Individuals with PPA may face other barriers in receiving care including limited availability of SLPs who specialize in PPA, and limited insurance coverage of SLP treatment. In hopes of circumventing these barriers, the Communication Bridge study provides web-based SLP treatment to individuals with PPA and their care partners residing both nationally and internationally. The study aims to understand SLP treatment effects on communication abilities in people living with PPA and to determine optimal intervention strategies for this population.

Results from a pilot study of 57 participants with PPA demonstrated that functional gains and increased confidence in communication after eight weeks of SLP treatment were maintained for the subsequent four months. The next phase of Communication Bridge is currently underway in a randomized controlled trial that delivers web-based SLP treatment to individuals with PPA and their communication partners. Participants are enrolled in the study for approximately one year and take part in 15 SLP treatment sessions, five SLP evaluations, and exercises to support communication through a custom web-application on a computer provided for the length of the study.

Enrollment began in May 2018. There are currently 44 individuals with mild PPA and their communication partners enrolled in the study. Planned enrollment will add an additional 48 participants over the next two years. Current participants come from 18 states, two Canadian provinces, and England. Interest in the study has been extremely

high. To enroll in the study, participants must be in the mild stages of PPA, be English speaking, have adequate experience with computers, and have a communication partner who is willing to participate.

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