An Individual and Group Therapy Model: Creating a Real World Environment

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Introduction

- Patients with neurogenic communication disorders routinely receive speech-language therapy within the context of a one on one dyad with a clinician.
- While individual speech-language therapy provides more structured intervention to address speech, language and cognitive impairments; oftentimes these skills do not generalize to other communicative contexts.
- Group therapy provides opportunities for utilizing important skills addressed in the therapeutic context as well as the foundation for a naturalistic setting where patients can receive social and emotional support and challenges for real world problem solving.

Patient Population: Demographics

Total number of adult patients: 40

Number of patients regularly seen for group therapy: 15

Mean Age: 64.2 years of age

Age Range: 34 to 79 years of age

Gender: Female 33% Male 67%

Marital Status:

    Married: 13% Single: 61% Divorced/Widowed: 26%

Location: New York Metropolitan Area

Mean Educational Level: College Degree (16 years of education)

Primary Medical Disorders (in order of frequency): Stroke (54%), Traumatic Brain Injury (30%), Primary Progressive Aphasia (12%), Multiple Sclerosis (2%), Tartive Dyskinesia (2%)

Mean length of time of disorder: 7 years

Intervention 1. Assessment

All patients receive an in-depth speech-language and cognitive evaluation consisting of formal and informal protocols. The purpose of testing is to:

1. Determine the current level of communicative function.
2. Develop functional outcome measures.

<u>Formal Assessment Tools:</u>
The Scales of Cognitive Ability for Traumatic Brain Injury (SCATBI)
Examining for Aphasia-4 (EFA-4)
Cognitive Assessment of Minnesota (CAM)
Aphasia Diagnostic Profile (ADP)
Ross Information Processing Assessment-Geriatric (RIPA-G)
Scales of Cognitive and Communicative Ability for Neurorehabilitation-Norming Edition (SCCAN)
Gray Oral Reading Tests-4 (GORT-4)
Test of Adolescent and Adult Language-4 (TOAL-4)

<u>Informal Assessment Tools:</u>
In-depth case history
Recalling Digits
Recalling sentences
Temporal orientation
Immediate, Short-term and delayed recall
Problem solving
Deductive and Inferential reasoning
Confrontational naming
Written organization
Recalling details from an orally presented paragraphs
Language sample

Intervention 2. Individual Therapy

Patient receive 1 hour of individualized speech therapy 2-3 times a week in order to improve intentional communication, expression of ideas, sharing of information, enhancement of interpersonal interactions and improvement of listening and comprehension skills.
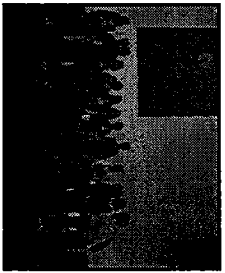
Intervention 3. Group Therapy

Our group therapy model provides an integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing, utilizing a thematic approach. This therapeutic milieu facilitates relearning of speech and language skills, enhances metacognitive skills needed for optimal communication, and supports social interactions among peers.

- Patients receive feedback from multiple communication partners, use strategies learned in their individual sessions, and monitor their speech and language skills in a more naturalistic setting.

Group Types & Objectives

- **Primary Speech/Language/Cognitive Group**
  - Short-term and immediate memory
  - Word finding skills
  - Topic maintenance skills
  - Improve attention/focus
  - Processing information from a range of communicative partners
  - Facilitation of new learning
  - Socialization skills
- **Computer Group**
  - New learning of computer skills and pertinent terminology
  - Short-term and immediate recall
  - Problem solving skills
  - Sequencing of skills necessary to complete various computer tasks
  - Socialization skills such as turn taking, requesting help, etc.,
  - Attentional skills
  - Word-finding
  - Processing Information
- **Literature Group**
  - Attentional skills
  - Topic maintenance
  - Critical thinking
  - Metalinguistics skills (e.g., analyzing poems, short stories)
  - Processing information (e.g., poems, short stories, interpretation of material)

Sample Group Topics

People:
  Musicians: Bob Marley, Frank Sinatra, Billie Holiday
  Artists: Van Gogh, Matisse, Chagall, Monet, Roy Lichtenstein
  Politicians: Barack Obama, George Washington, Bill Clinton

Places:
  Landmarks: Statue of Liberty, Great Wall of China, Golden Gate Bridge
  Countries: Spain, Israel, Italy, Argentina, Russia

Events:
  Currents: Elections, housing crisis, holidays, news events
  Annual: Running of the Bulls, Chinese New Year, 4th of July

Implications

- In addition to the objectives targeted in the three groups contexts, group therapy also provides social support for members.
- Language use in a range of social contexts supports generalization of effective language for participants in their naturalistic contexts. Members share their feelings and concerns about their communication and cognitive deficits outside of the therapeutic milieu.
- Participants also have the ability to practice utilizing their communication & socialization skills with multiple communication partners in a non-judgmental environment while speech-language pathologists offer structured support, and modeling/cueing to promote effective communication.

Results & Discussion

- Patients support and help each other which increases their self esteem and interpersonal skills.
- Patients generalize targets in a supportive environment (e.g. pragmatics, topic maintenance, turn taking, vocal volume, word finding)
- Patients enjoy the social interaction and continue these interactions outside of therapy. Long lasting friendships develop over the course attending group 2-3 times a week.
- Learning about real world topics provide increased generalization of targets in a real world setting (e.g. a. discussing travel themes helps patient make traveling plans for themselves, utilizing map skills)
- Discussing current events facilitates reading and understanding of various media sources such as newspapers and magazines. This allows patients to engage in conversation with family members and caregivers.
- Patient reported outcomes:
  - "Going to group made me realize I am not stupid." R.A.
  - ➤ "I can read better now then September." M.S.
  - ➤ "I can talk now." T.H.

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