

Critical Review:

Does treatment using meaningful gestures improve functional, expressive communication skills in adults with acquired apraxia of speech?

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This critical review examines evidence related to treatments for severe, acquired apraxia of speech, which

Additionally, the gestures used must have been iconic or meaningful in nature.

Data Collection

Results of the literature search yielded five studies based on two different theoretical approaches to AOS intervention. The theoretical bases included: IR (2), AAC (1), or a combination of the two approaches (2). Year of publication ranged from 1974 to 2006. The experimental designs included: ABABA (1); multiple-baseline, across behaviours (1); and case studies (3). All participants in were identified as having “severe” AOS.

methods described in this study are approaching validity (e.g. partial blinding of raters, and repeating measures), without controls, it is still difficult to judge whether improvements are attributable to the treatment.

Treatment via the total communication approach – encouraging the use of multiple modes of communication – has been reported to result in improved expressive communication skills for adults with AOS (Fawcus & Fawcus, 1990). An increasing emphasis on functional communication led Fawcus & Fawcus (1990) to investigate, through case studies, the use of AAC within a total communication approach. Modes of communication included: gestures/miming, drawing and writing. Four participants with “severe dyspraxia” were trained in group therapy to increase their awareness of AAC strategies. Each subject was then presented with a message to convey to their caregivers at home, despite some doubts regarding the participants’ ability to retain the message long enough. The extent to which the message was correctly conveyed, which nonverbal strategies were employed, and the time it took to convey each message were all dependent factors recorded by the caregiver. Gestures were used to communicate 39% of the elements with 24% errors, suggesting that gestures may be a viable mode of communication but that they require more work to improve their accuracy (Fawcus & Fawcus,

predominately within drilled tasks. Despite limited

