

Background Information – why the study was undertaken

- The National Clinical Guidelines for stroke (RCP, 2012) highlight the importance of long term, continuing support for people with aphasia (PWA).
- The current evidence base suggests that community based, post discharge support groups have a positive effect on the lives of PWA. Research suggests that PWA attending these groups report greater self confidence, improved psychological wellbeing and positive relationships with others (Shadden & Agan 2004; Van der Gaag, 2005).
- This undergraduate project was designed to investigate the emotions of participants whilst they attended a support group and to learn whether attending the group had contributed to their happiness.

Method – how the study was done

Fourteen volunteers with aphasia, from two different community groups, participated in this research:

Average age	Women	Men	Boston Diagnostic Aphasia Examination Severity Rating Scale (Goodglass and Kaplan, 2001)					
			Severe 0	1	2	3	4	Minimal 5
65.7	8	6	-	-	4 PWA	4 PWA	3 PWA	3 PWA

This interview based research project was conducted using Hoen et al's (2007) "How I feel about myself questionnaire" an aphasia friendly adaptation of Ryff's (1989) Psychological Wellbeing Questionnaire. This measure of happiness is made up of six dimensions thought to contribute to emotional wellbeing. The aphasia friendly response format was informed by the evidence base (Cruice et al 2003 and Hilari et al 2007) and ensured that PWA could participate in this research.

When I am at this support group:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	A bit of both	Agree	Strongly agree
Domain: Autonomy					
1) I have confidence in my own opinions no matter what					
Domain: Environmental mastery					
20) I feel in charge of my life					
Domain: Personal growth					
15) I don't want to try new things – my life is fine the way it is					
Domain: Positive relations with others					
22) I get lot out of my friendships					
Domain: Purpose in life					
11) I feel what I do is unimportant					
Domain: Self acceptance					
24) I seem to have more weaknesses than others					
Additional question:					
25) Attending this support group has made me happier					

Results – what was found

- 13/14 reported that attending the support groups had made them happier.
- The average score on Ryff's (1989) psychological wellbeing scale was 89.5/125 (71.6%).
- Levene's test and subsequent independent t-tests suggested that PWA felt more positively their ability to be autonomous, (mean 15.21, p 0.001) experience personal growth (mean 15.14, p0.001) and enjoy positive relations with others (mean 15.5, p0.002) compared to their ability to control their environment (mean 11.93).
- There did not appear to be a relationship between the severity of aphasia and psychological wellbeing score.

Discussion – implications for future research

- These results support the evidence base that suggests PWA experience happiness within support groups.
- Ryff's (1989) adapted scale may be a useful outcome measure for this client group.
- Ratings in response to statements such as:

"The demands of every day life often get me down"

"I feel defeated because I can't keep up with everything I have to do"

suggest that daily life with aphasia is challenging and at times overwhelming. This is despite the ongoing and valuable care provided by support groups such as those described in this research.