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NEW TOOLS AND APPROACHES IN COMMUNICATION

– PERCEPTIONS OF STAFF IN A MULTIDISCIPLINARY,
SUB-ACUTE SETTING

BACKGROUND

Communication between patients and health care staff is essential in rehabilitation. Patients with aphasia (PWA) may meet communication barriers in the physical environment, negative staff attitudes or unskilled communication partners (Horton et al., 2016). In a sub-acute setting, efforts were made to enhance communicative environmental access and staff approach to conversation with PWA. As part of this process, Supported Conversation for Adults With Aphasia (SCA™) was applied (Kagan et al., 2001). Furthermore, staff was introduced to the Swedish KomHIT model which is based on the UN principles regarding accessibility (Thunberg, Buchholz & Nilsson, 2016).

AIM

The aim of this study is to explore the perceptions of the staff in a sub-acute multidisciplinary setting regarding the SCA™ method and the KomHIT model aimed at communication with patients with aphasia.

METHOD

Two wards at Hammel Neurorehabilitation Centre (HNC) were included. Focus group interviews were conducted, one for each ward. In each group a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist, and a nurse/health care worker were participating. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed into orthography. A primarily data driven thematic analysis was conducted, and categories were generated in close interaction with the coding process.

RESULTS

Preliminary findings indicate that staff at HNC profits from the new approaches to communication with PWA. Hence, staff members stated that they find the approaches and some of the specific tools useful when applying them in communication with patients. Most of all, they find the SCA™ method useful as it requires little preparation and can be used in many different situations. Contrarily, concerns were expressed regarding the use of pictures in the communication with PWA as staff finds the preparation for this very time consuming.

DISCUSSION

In general, staff members reported new tools and approaches as relevant and useful. However, some challenges were mentioned, e.g. time consuming preparation. This is similar to the findings of Jensen et al. (2014) who found that staff mentioned lack of time as a significant barrier in using tools and techniques. The findings pose a question of how to balance the time needed for appropriate communication with patients with other necessary tasks to be attended to by the staff.

RESULTS

<p>1) STAFF MEMBERS FIND THE NEW APPROACHES AND TOOLS VERY RELEVANT FOR COMMUNICATION WITH PWA.</p> <p><i>"I think that both approaches are absolutely welcome as they contribute to enhancing the communication level and our understanding of communication. And we have got some very specific tools, I think."</i></p> <p><i>"I have been thinking a lot about it. Now I actually ask questions because I have a tool helping me doing it, and that is very nice."</i></p> <p><i>"I think that in my head it makes very good sense to have both of them because I can see that they supplement each other very well."</i></p>	<p>2) MOST OF ALL, STAFF MEMBERS FIND THE SCA™ APPROACH USEFUL AS IT REQUIRES LITTLE PREPARATION AND CAN BE USED IN VARIOUS SITUATIONS.</p> <p><i>"I think that with s c a we very quickly experienced that it works."</i></p> <p><i>"I think that this s c a, I think that it matches our ward in being an operable tool that does not require a lot of [] extra time, and you can use it in the immediate situation."</i></p> <p><i>"It is not rocket science, it is available."</i></p>	<p>3) THE KOM-HIT APPROACH IS ALSO FOUND RELEVANT ALTHOUGH MORE DIFFICULT TO IMPLEMENT, ESPECIALLY DUE TO THE NEED FOR PREPARATION OF PICTURE MATERIALS.</p> <p><i>"Komhit sort of requires that one has prepared for the situation."</i></p> <p><i>"You have to make pictures and stuff like that. And you have to find out how it works. Then the pictures should be laminated."</i></p> <p><i>"Well, I think that it is difficult to manage all those pictures and find the right ones. When one has them, I think that it works very well."</i></p>
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CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CLINICAL PRACTICE

The new tools and approaches seem to be relevant in a sub-acute setting. Results indicate that staff finds the SCA™ method easily applied in the clinical work, whereas the preparation of pictures for communication with a patient is found to be very time consuming.

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