

A Survey of the Use of Evidence-Based Practice in Treatment of Aphasia

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Introduction

- The need for more and stronger evidence for treatment approaches has become a priority in speech-language pathology in recent years. As a profession, we need to be able to prove that what we do works. However, clinicians often view the concept of evidence-based practice as using "cookbook therapy" (Frattali and Worrall, 2001).

Introduction

- The problem of lack of evidence seems to be pervasive in the allied health fields (Turner, 2002).
- The current study was modeled after a 1999 survey of hospital physiotherapists in England and Australia which found that clinicians were most likely to choose treatment approaches that they had learned in school or had previous success with (Turner and Whitfield, 1999).

Current Study

- Question 1: Are doctoral level clinicians more likely than master's level clinicians to base treatment decisions on efficacy data?
- Question 2: Are ANCCS board-certified clinicians more likely than non-board-certified clinicians to base treatment decisions on efficacy data?
- Question 3: What other factors influence SLPs in choosing treatment approaches for patients with aphasia?

Methods

- Participants were recruited via e-mail from ASHA's Special Interest Division for Neurophysiology and Neurogenic Speech and Language Disorders (Division 2). All were practicing speech-language pathologists who had treated patients with aphasia in the past year.

Methods

- A survey was e-mailed to 976 individuals in November 2003 and again in March 2004 to those who did not respond to the initial request. A total of 208 were returned as undeliverable. Eighty-four of the remaining 768 individuals completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 11%.

Table 1: Percentage of responses by reason—all respondents.

I learned it in school, in either practicum or coursework.	35%
I learned about it in a journal review article or book.	21%
I have had positive results using it with previous patients.	16%
I learned about it in a continuing education activity.	14%
I learned about the efficacy of it in a journal research article.	6%
A colleague recommended it.	4%
I am using it as part of a research project.	1%
I saw it advertised, e.g., in a catalog, vendor's booth, vendor's presentation, etc.	1%

Other Findings

- Non-board-certified clinicians were more likely than board certified clinicians to rely on the treatment approaches they learned in school ($t = 2.777, p < .05$).
- Master's level clinicians were more likely than doctoral level clinicians to choose treatment approaches with which they had prior success ($t = 4.173, p < .05$).

Other Findings

- Clinicians with more than 5 years experience were not more likely than those with fewer than 5 years experience to use efficacy studies in their choice of treatment approaches.
- Board-certified v. non-board-certified: No significant differences in rationale for treatment approaches were found other than the one cited earlier.

Comments from Participants

- "I follow what the patient needs... I'm not familiar with many of the above-listed strategies."
- "I used books and reviews initially and now use primarily research articles and efficacy articles."
- "Self-designed/created, individualized approaches are mainly what I use."

Comments from Participants

- "Approaches above are 'cookbook' approaches. I seldom follow the exact protocol, but have my own variations to suit the patient's cognitive-linguistic strengths and weaknesses. I know few experienced therapists who use a single individual approach with any one patient, but a combination of approaches...depending on needs."

Conclusions

- As a group, speech-language pathologists tend to rely primarily on methods they learned in their training programs.
- Doctoral level clinicians tend more to use research evidence to support the methods they use.

What are we doing about EBP in speech-language pathology?

- ANCDs is preparing and disseminating a series of evidence-based practice guidelines.
- ASHA's National Outcomes Measurement System (NOMS) has been collecting data in several areas of practice.
- More emphasis is being placed on evidence-based practice in continuing education activities.

What are other professions doing?

- Medicine, nursing, and mental health all have journals devoted to evidence-based practice (Worrall and Bennett, 2001).
- Physical therapy has a journal, *Australian Journal of Physiotherapy*, with a section devoted to clinically appraised topics.

What are other professions doing?

- APTA has a service called "Hooked on Evidence" that provides literature reviews and written summaries on their website (Wolski, 2002).
- AOTA has a literature review service in the form of "web briefs" which provide "access to summary information of the scientific articles that address the effectiveness of interventions used in OT practice" (Wolski, 2002).

How can we better prepare students to evaluate and use evidence-based methods?

- Teach students in clinic classes how to conduct a literature search.
- Require practicum students to provide a literature citation for rationale on treatment plans.
- Teach students to critique the literature, e.g., method for Clinically Appraised Topic (Worrall and Bennett, 2001).

How can we better prepare students to evaluate and use evidence-based methods?

- Generally, encourage a shift in attitude away from the idea that creating one's own approach is superior to using a published method.

References

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