

Group singing intervention to improve wellbeing for people with aphasia



A team of PenCLAHRC researchers, supported by funding from the Stroke Association, are working on a new group-based music intervention for people with aphasia.

Of the more than 150,000 people who have a stroke each year, around a third will also experience aphasia – a speech and language disorder. People with aphasia can struggle to speak or understand spoken language and may have difficulties with reading, writing or using numbers. They also report a range of psychological and social problems, which negatively affect wellbeing, including reduced confidence and social isolation. These issues are often inadequately dealt with by healthcare services.

Previous studies have suggested that group music-making can have potential benefits for wellbeing. However, there is a lack of definitive data on the psychosocial outcomes of people with aphasia. This research aims to address this gap.

Project team member, Professor Chris Code, Honorary Research Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Exeter: "People with aphasia who have problems producing spoken language appear less impaired when they sing. Many choirs exist that provide social engagement and support but their effectiveness for improving quality of life and wellbeing has not been evaluated. This is something we are excited about examining with this project."

What Happened Next?

An initial study was conducted that developed and delivered the first session of the proposed group singing intervention and engagement work for people with aphasia. The engagement activities and development project provided a strong incentive to further pursue the research.

In the next stage, we will pilot test a full programme of group singing activities. Participants will attend a 90-minute group singing session each week for 10 weeks. Sessions will be led by a community musician, co-facilitated by a person with aphasia and will involve the group singing songs from a songbook. Percussion instruments will also be available for participants to play, enabling involvement of those with limited singing ability (or confidence).

The wellbeing, quality of life, social participation and communication effectiveness of the intervention will be assessed over the course of the study and fifteen participants will also be invited for a face-to-face interview.

From this research, the team will be able to inform the development of a future definitive test of the intervention – an important step to ensuring a larger trial is viable.

For further information visit:

www.clahrc-peninsula.nihr.ac.uk



References:

Tarrant, M., Warmoth, K., Code, C., Dean, S., Goodwin, V.A., Stein, K., Sugavanam, T. (2016). Creating psychological connections between intervention recipients: Development and focus group evaluation of a group singing session for people with aphasia. *BMJ Open*, 6:e009652 doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2015-009652. Available at: <http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/6/2/e009652.full>

Tamplin, J., Baker, F.A., Jones, B., Way, A., & Lee, S. (2013) 'Stroke a Chord': The effect of singing in a community choir on mood and social engagement for people living with aphasia following a stroke. *NeuroRehabilitation*, 32, 929-941.

Useful Links:

clahrc-peninsula.nihr.ac.uk/research/group-singing-for-aphasia

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