

Would mindfulness techniques enable the person with aphasia to minimise the impact of anxiety?

Currently there is little existing research work in the area of mindfulness in relation to people with aphasia. However, the techniques used in mindfulness would seem to lend themselves to being carried out by people with aphasia, as it is substantially based in non-verbal activities.

The development of this research is therefore being informed by asking people with aphasia about any current strategies they use to minimise anxiety and its impact on communication. In addition to this the researcher is exploring mindfulness to consider how it may increase the ability of people with aphasia to cope with anxiety and to minimise the impact of their language difficulties in both 'comfortable' and more stress-inducing situations.

As well as engaging with people with stroke to inform the development of this research, the research team are undertaking a systematic review.

Systematic Review Question:

Are mindfulness and other CBT techniques effective in improving communication in people with acquired, non-progressive aphasia?

Rationale

Clinical practice tells us that anxiety has a significant impact on communication for people with aphasia. People with very mild or resolved aphasia report that in situations of high stress or when under pressure, they experience an increase in their language difficulties, for example in word retrieval. There is a substantial body of evidence in support of mindfulness-based approaches for a number of health and psychological conditions, including anxiety (e.g. Kabat-Zinn et al. 1992). We might therefore speculate that if anxiety can be more effectively managed, communicative effectiveness will be enhanced. Furthermore, mindfulness has also been shown to have a positive impact on attentional skills, which in turn have been shown to be compromised in people with aphasia.

Objectives

This review aims to identify studies which investigate the impact of mindfulness and other cognitive behavioural approaches on the language performance of people with aphasia.

Participants – adults with acquired, non-progressive aphasia (any aetiology)

Intervention – mindfulness based stress reduction; mindfulness based cognitive therapy; other cognitive behavioural therapies

Comparison – any intervention or no intervention

Outcome – improved communicative effectiveness

Researcher:

Sophie Cottrell

Stef Ticehurst

Funder:

Pat Charitable Fund, North Bristol NHS Trust Speech and Language Therapy service.