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Emotional and Language recovery for people with Aphasia (ELA): co-designing a novel intervention

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Introduction

Having aphasia increases the risk of becoming depressed, anxious and isolated. People with aphasia want to work on communication, confidence, and wellbeing. We aimed to co-design a novel intervention that would address these priorities through integrating two evidence-based therapy approaches: elaborated semantic feature analysis (ESFA); and solution focused brief therapy (SFBT), a brief psychological therapy.

Methods

A series of workshops were held with five people with aphasia (6 workshops); three family members (3 workshops); and four speech and language therapists (SLTs) (3 workshops). In addition, meetings were held with experts in SFBT and elaborated SFA. This information was analysed using qualitative content analysis and mapped onto a therapy manual. Consultants with aphasia and student SLTs trialled therapy components for further refinement.

Results

Themes from the workshops and expert meetings included: important features of therapy (e.g., sense of progress; therapeutic relationship; real-life impact); managing endings; involving family (e.g., noticing their hopes and needs); choosing meaningful words to target in therapy; supporting home practice; dosage and delivery; integrating impairment and wellbeing work; therapist training and support needs. Initial feedback has been positive: student SLTs reported the intervention helped them to 'see the person'; people with aphasia found it satisfying, enjoyable and described re-engaging in valued activities post therapy.

Conclusions

ELA is a language therapy delivered within a holistic, humanistic framework, designed to be delivered within busy clinical services. It harnesses the behavioural change components of SFBT to facilitate clients taking linguistic gains from the therapy room into their everyday life.