

Aphasia, an acquired language disorder resulting from brain damage, significantly impacts expressive and receptive language (McNeil & Pratt, 2001). Effective communication strategies, including but not limited to providing extra time, using communication tools, speaking in simple sentences are crucial in understanding and supporting meaningful interactions with people who have aphasia. Family members and caregivers are integral members of a rehabilitation (Howe et al., 2012). They bridge the gap between clinical settings and real-life challenges (Wallace et al., 2017). Their unique perspective offers valuable insights for developing individualized intervention plans, often overlooked (Le Dorze & Signori, 2010). Despite their acknowledged importance, a notable gap exists in understanding the experiences, challenges, and communication strategies utilized by these essential communication partners while communicating with their loved ones with aphasia. *The aim of this study is to explore caregivers' perspectives on their encounters with communication barriers and identify the communication supports they use while communicating with their loved ones with aphasia.* Specifically, we aim to answer the following questions: 1. How do caregivers describe the types of communication barriers they encounter with their loved ones with aphasia? 2. What specific communication supports do caregivers use to address these barriers? 3. What are the factors that influence caregivers' choice and use of different communication supports? 4. What additional communication support resources or training would be most beneficial for caregivers of individuals with aphasia?

Methods and Data Analyses: The study has been approved by MU IRB (IRB- [REDACTED]).

Overall, 10 caregivers of individuals with aphasia will be recruited. Phenomenological interview (Høffding & Martiny, 2016) will be conducted via Zoom. The interview will consist of open-

ended questions targeting the following areas: (1) the communication strategies used by caregivers, (2) collaboration with other professionals, (3) challenges in healthcare for people with aphasia, (4) involvement of family members in individuals with aphasia's healthcare, (5) caregiver training for communication strategies and supports. The interviews will be audio recorded. [REDACTED]. All interviews will be orthographically transcribed and analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis with the use of NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. This SURF project lays the foundation for my master's thesis. Under the mentorship of Dr. [REDACTED], I successfully submitted and received IRB approval. During summer [REDACTED], I will initiate participant recruitment, aiming to complete a minimum of five interviews (total: 10 participants) with caregivers and gain hands-on experience with phenomenological methods. I also plan to learn and start analyzing data for the first participant using NVivo. This collaboration with Dr. [REDACTED] will prepare me for future research endeavors and significantly contribute to my understanding of caregiver's role in aphasia rehabilitation.

Proposed Timeline and Defined Deliverables for the Summer:

Defined Deliverables	May	June	July	August
1. Complete the mock interview and conduct data analyses of the mock interview				
2. Meetings with [REDACTED]				
3. Complete data collection for at least 5 participants.				
4. Commence the transcription and coding process for at least 1 participant to identify codes and code frequencies.				
5. Initiate the learning process for using NVivo software for data coding.				
6. Transcription and coding of the remaining participants				
7. Start preparing a poster for a future SURF presentation				

Significance: The findings can help identify the specific needs and challenges faced by caregivers, informing the development of support programs and resources to improve their well-being and ability to provide care.

Selected References:

Høffding, S., & Martiny, K. (2016). Framing a phenomenological interview: what, why and how.

Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences, 15, 539-564.

Howe, T., Davidson, B., Worrall, L., Hersh, D., Ferguson, A., Sherratt, S., & Gilbert, J. (2012). 'You

needed to rehab... families as well': family members' own goals for aphasia

rehabilitation. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, 47(5),

511-521.

Le Dorze, G., & Signori, F.-H. (2010). Needs, barriers and facilitators experienced by spouses of

people with aphasia. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 32(13), 1073-1087.

McNeil, M. R., & Pratt, S. R. (2001). Defining aphasia: Some theoretical and clinical implications

of operating from a formal definition. *Aphasiology*, 15(10-11), 901-911.

Wallace, S. J., Worrall, L., Rose, T., Le Dorze, G., Cruice, M., Isaksen, J., Kong, A. P. H., Simmons-

Mackie, N., Scarinci, N., & Gauvreau, C. A. (2017). Which outcomes are most important

to people with aphasia and their families? An international nominal group technique

study framed within the ICF. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 39(14), 1364-1379.

The Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs
Misericordia University
Dallas, PA 18612

Subject: Letter of intent for Summer Undergraduate research Fellowship

Dear Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) Committee,

I am excited to apply for the [REDACTED] Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship at Misericordia University. I am certain this fellowship will be an asset to my development as a clinical researcher in the field of speech-language pathology (SLP).

During my time as an SLP student, I have accumulated four semesters of research experience, honing skills in compiling Institutional Review Board documents, transcribing and coding data, and proficiently using data analysis software (e.g. Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts), all while maintaining a strong 3.89 GPA. Presenting at the *American Speech-Language and Hearing Association convention* in [REDACTED], as well as the *Pennsylvania Speech-Language and Hearing Association convention* [REDACTED], has been one of my notable achievements. Additionally, providing augmentative and alternative communication training sessions to caregivers of individuals with Primary Progressive Aphasia has enriched my experience as a student researcher in the Communication in Healthcare and Assistive Technology (CHAT) lab. My involvement in this study sparked my interest in conducting mentored research in this domain.

For my SURF proposal, I aim to conduct a qualitative study titled "Communicating with Individuals with Aphasia: Caregiver Perspectives" under the mentorship of Dr. [REDACTED]. This study will offer valuable insights into the experiences of caregivers when communicating with those with aphasia. From personal experience, having a family member with aphasia has exposed me to the myriad challenges faced by both the individual and their caregivers. The opportunity to contribute to such research holds great significance for me, both as a future speech-language pathologist and as a family member.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,