Promoting Aphasia Awareness

Yvonne M. Faria  
*CUNY Lehman College*

Fiona McNulty  
*CUNY Lehman College*

Veronica C. Gonzalez  
*CUNY Lehman College*

Peggy S. Conner  
*CUNY Lehman College*

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INTRODUCTION

• Previous studies have shown that aphasia knowledge and awareness amongst the public is limited. As advancements in the medical community improve life expectancy for patients with aphasia, the prevalence of people with this disorder will only increase.

• Elman, Ogar, and Elman (2000) searched newspaper articles for the term “aphasia” and found that it was mentioned with much lower frequency than five other health conditions that have comparable (or lower) incidence rates.

• A 2016 survey by the National Aphasia Association suggests aphasia awareness continues to be low. Based on this information, we predicted that a search of recent newspaper articles would yield similar underrepresentation for aphasia.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

• How does the frequency of newspaper articles mentioning aphasia compare with other health conditions that have similar incidence rates (e.g., Elman et al., 2000)?

• How has the coverage of aphasia in newspapers increased over the past 20 years relative to other health conditions?

METHODOLOGY

Nexis-Uni Database Search

[Health Condition] → “Newspapers” → Time Range

RESULTS

• The results indicate an increase in the number of newspaper articles containing the term “aphasia.” However, consistent with Elman et al.’s study, aphasia continues to be underrepresented relative to other health conditions.

• Over the past 20 years the coverage of aphasia in the media has steadily increased, yet other health conditions are mentioned 5 to 20 times more often than aphasia.

• Autism received the greatest mention in newspaper media coverage, with nearly 115,000 newspaper stories in the last five years. Autism received more article mentions in 30 days (2,827) than aphasia received in the span of five years (2013 – 2017).

CONCLUSION

• The term aphasia remains underrepresented in newspaper articles and this trend has not changed significantly over the past two decades.

• What external factors may influence why some health conditions receive greater media coverage than others?

• External factors such as celebrity advocates and controversial topics (e.g., vaccinations - autism)

• Less media coverage means less grants and funding for services

• Aphasia, as a communication disorder, may greatly hinder self-advocacy

• Increased familiarity with aphasia is critical for helping people with this communication disorder and their families. Further research is needed to determine ways to effectively raise public awareness of aphasia, lending support to people with aphasia and improving their quality of life.

REFERENCES
