Stroke – Core Skills Training

Communication
Aims of session

• To discuss types of communication disorder post stroke
• How to assess communication
• How you can help
Aphasia

• Acquired communication ability that affects a person's language ability, but does not affect intelligence

• Very different from person to person
  - Speech (expressive)
  - Understanding (receptive)
  - Writing (dysgraphia)
  - Numbers (dysnomia)
  - All of the above = GLOBAL APHASIA

• 1/3 of people with stroke have aphasia
Dysarthria

A speech disorder involving any or all of the basic motor speech processes:

• Respiration
• Phonation
• Resonance
• Articulation
• Prosody
• .....resulting from disturbances in muscular control due to damage to the central or peripheral nervous system
What does it mean for the patient?
Impact of Communication Difficulties

- Confusion
- Shock
- Depression
- Frightened
- Anger
- Loss
- Frustration
- Loneliness
- Isolation
How to assess - understanding

- Point to the pen
- Point to the shoe and then the bottle
- Point to the pen, then the cup, then your head
How to assess - expression

• What is this?
• Describe it to me.....
  – What shape is it?
  – What colour is it?
  – What does it do?
How to assess – reading and writing

Reading:
• Touch your nose
• Touch your mouth then your ear
• Turn the paper over

Writing:
• Can you write your full name?
• Can you write the name of this hospital?
General Tips for Supporting Communication

• Reduce background noise and distractions
• Take your time
• Encourage non-verbal communication:
  – Gesture
  – Writing
  – Pointing
How to help
- if a person has difficulty understanding

• Get their attention before talking to them
• Talk slightly slower than usual
• Don’t jump from topic to topic
• Use clear, specific gestures
• Avoid long complex instructions
• Use familiar words and phrases, write down key words
• Point or show the object you are talking about
How to help
- if a person has difficulty talking

• Allow the person plenty of time to get their words out – much more time than you are used to
• Check you have understood “do you mean...”
• Don’t correct grammatical mistakes
• Use careful questioning – try to establish the general topic first and then ask questions about the details
• Ask yes/no questions
• Encourage non-verbal communication and drawing (Total Communication).
How to help
- if a person has difficulty with their speech

• Ask the person to slow down their speech
• Break longer words into syllables, e.g. Co-or-di-na-tion
• Overarticulate their sounds
• Encourage the person to monitor listener’s reaction and monitor the clarity of their own output
• Maintain face to face contact
Thank you
Disclaimer

• This presentation was developed collaboratively by the Wessex Ghana Stroke Partnership group in 2013 to support a face-to-face training programme. The content has been designed to be relevant to the Ghanaian setting, and may not have been updated to reflect changes in policy or evidence-base since this date.

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