

ASHA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
LEARN GROW EXCEL

## Perspectives on Aphasia: Communication Breakdowns in Medical Settings

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### Speaker Disclosure

- Financial
  - Director of Cruises and Events at the Aphasia Recovery Connection
  - Co-author of *Healing The Broken Brain: Leading Experts Answer 100 Questions About Stroke Recovery* and *Brain Attack: My Journey of Recovering From Stroke and Aphasia*
  - Financial compensation from ASHA for this presentation
- Nonfinancial:
  - Stroke survivor
  - Resource advocate



David Dow

## Speaker Disclosure

- Financial
  - Founding Board Member and Director of the Aphasia Recovery Connection
  - Independent contractor at St. Rose Dominican Hospitals, Las Vegas, NV.
  - Co-author of [Guide to Living with Aphasia](#)
  - Financial compensation from ASHA for this presentation
- Nonfinancial
  - Member of AphasiaAccess
  - Aphasia advocate
  - Resource advocate



**Carol Dow-Richards**

## Speaker Disclosure

- Financial
  - Anesthesiologist, Columbus Regional Hospital, North Carolina
  - Financial compensation from ASHA for this presentation
- Nonfinancial
  - Volunteer and speaker for Aphasia Recovery Connection
  - Medical team volunteer for Aphasia Cruises

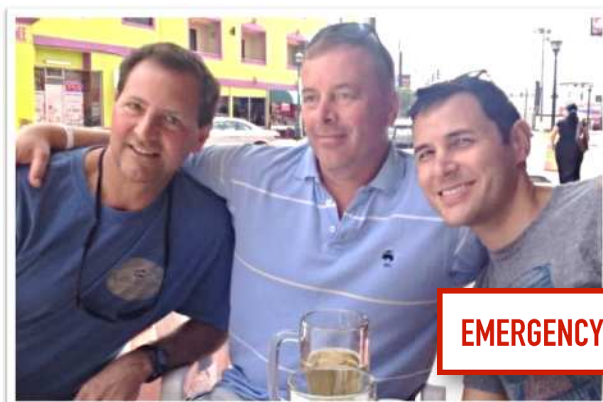


**John Schultz, MD**

## A patient story of a **BIG** problem and a **SIMPLE** solution



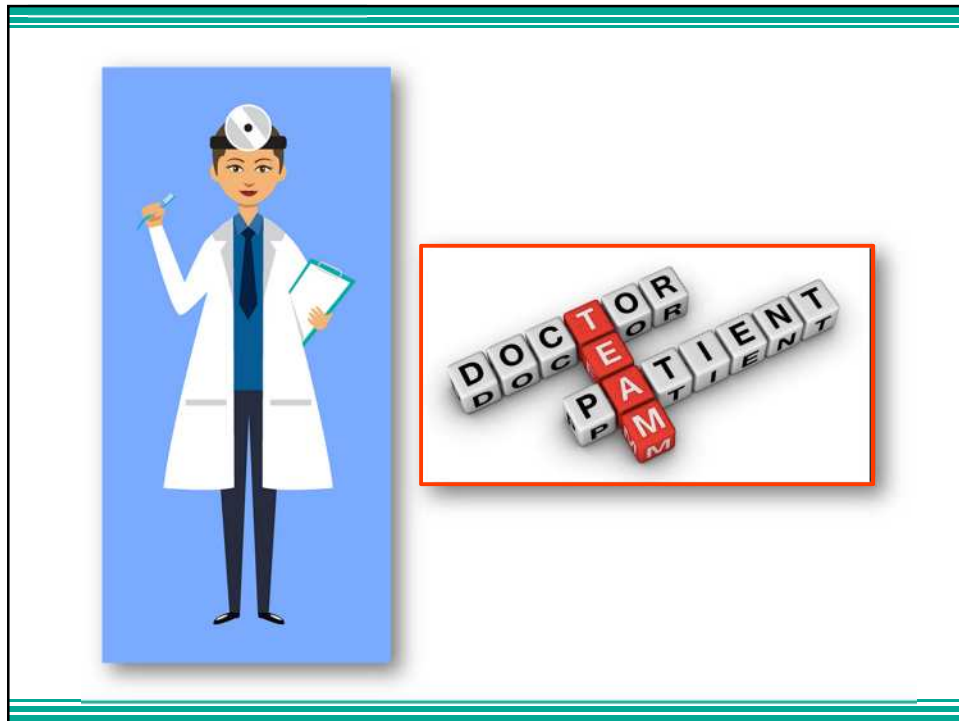
### The Problem



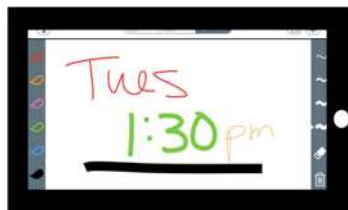
**Rob**  
Stroke Survivor

**John**  
Medical Doctor

**David**  
Stroke Survivor



## The Solution



### My name is Rob.

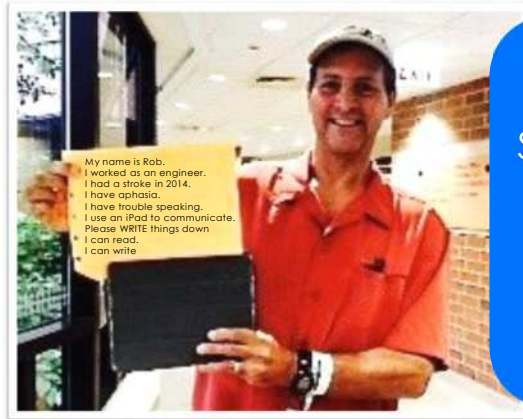
I worked as an engineer.  
I had a stroke in 2014.

I have aphasia.  
I have trouble speaking.

I use an iPad to communicate.  
Please WRITE things down for me.

I can read.  
I can write.

My wife is Julie.  
Her number is xxx-xxx-xxxx.



Help your patients  
**SELF-ADVOCATE.**  
Write out a  
simple  
explanation  
for them to  
share.



**Doctor**

Joint  
Commission  
statement



**Patient**

Diagnosed  
with global  
aphasia  
Experience  
after 15  
years of  
therapy



**Caregiver**

Resources

Your ability to listen and learn new  
information and ideas is not what matters...  
What matters is your commitment to  
translate ideas into action.





**John  
Schultz, MD**

## Aphasia Cruises

- “Breakfast with the Doc”
- Role playing
- Life participation approach to aphasia activities



Patients who have **good communication** with doctors are more likely to adhere to treatments and follow advice

This is strongly associated with their recovery

They are less likely to lodge complaints or initiate malpractice complaints

(Stewart et al., 2000)



However, many doctors  
tend to overestimate their  
ability in communication  
**ARE YOU YOUR PATIENT'S  
ADVOCATE?**

1. Take the time to talk to the staff
2. Offer information about aphasia by providing or posting ASHA aphasia fact sheets
3. Write out a patient self-advocate sheet (such as Rob's in the previous example)

**Communication failures** are the leading  
root cause of sentinel events reported  
to the Joint Commission

More specifically, the Joint Commission  
cites **communication failures** as the  
leading root cause for medical errors,  
delays in treatment, wrong-site surgeries,  
and operative and post-operative events

(Joint Commission Guide to Improving Staff Communications, 2009)

Much patient dissatisfaction and many complaints are due to the **breakdown** in the doctor and patient relationship

Patients often struggle to **read** or **understand** spoken language

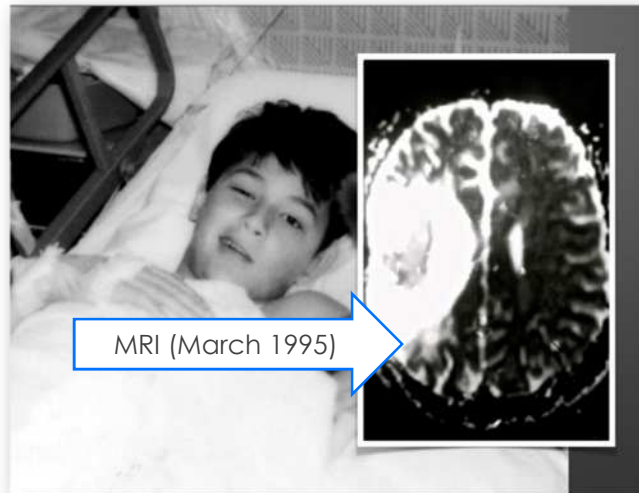
Much patient dissatisfaction and many complaints are due to the **breakdown** in the doctor and patient relationship.

Effective communication is central in building the staff-patient relationship

### The Heart and Art of Medicine







**David Dow**



- I could not understand what happened
- I could not talk
- I had no tools to support communication
- I could not understand what was being said
- I could not use a call button

- I didn't understand simple information
- I didn't know if I would improve
- My family didn't know how to communicate with me
- My family was not given a brochure or resources
- No aphasia apps in 1995



CVA  
Global aphasia  
Right-side hemiplegia  
Moyamoya disease

## Tools and Resources to Add to the Staff and Therapy Toolbox



Your patients **RELY** on **YOU** for resources for:

- Safety** - Are their needs met?
- Leisure** - Now what?
- Family** - Connection matters

## DR. AUDREY HOLLAND



**Carol Dow-  
Richards**

- 3 month hospital stay
- What resources would have been helpful?

## Types of resources and why they are useful

Specific examples include free and for-pay resources

**Find** specific resources that work for you and your clients and **share them** with colleagues, families, and clients



Afasia? Afaza?  
Afhaza?


More than 90% of the families we interviewed said they did not receive **any** written information on aphasia while in the hospital

Additionally, families did not know how to SPELL **a-p-h-a-s-i-a** so struggled to search online

## Every family should be given basic information about aphasia

- ❑ Have print outs for families, doctors, nurses, etc.
- ❑ Highlight relevant tips
- ❑ Suggest the patient post in their room
- ❑ Give them extra copies
- ❑ Put a link to the printout on your phone for easy access

The image shows a screenshot of the ASHA website page for Aphasia. The page title is "Aphasia" with a sub-header "[en Español]". Below this, a grey box contains the text: "A person with aphasia may have trouble understanding, speaking, reading, or writing. Speech-language pathologists can help." Underneath, a section titled "On this page:" lists several links: "About Aphasia", "Signs", "Causes", "Testing", "Treatments", "Tips for Communicating With a Person Who Has Aphasia", and "Other Resources". A blue callout box with white text "Basic Information about Aphasia" is overlaid on the right side of the page. Below the links, the "About Aphasia" section begins with the text: "Aphasia is a language disorder that happens when you have brain damage. Your brain has two halves. Language skills are in the left half of the brain in most people. Damage on that side of your brain may lead to language problems. Damage on the right side of your brain may cause other problems, like poor attention or memory." This is followed by a paragraph explaining that aphasia can make it hard to understand, speak, read, or write, and that it does not make you less smart. It also mentions that brain damage can cause other problems along with aphasia, such as muscle weakness in the mouth (dysarthria), trouble getting the muscles of the mouth to move the right way to say words (apraxia), and swallowing problems (dysphagia). The "Signs of Aphasia" section follows, stating that aphasia can lead to a number of different problems, including trouble talking, understanding, reading, and writing. At the bottom of the page, the URL [www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/Aphasia/](http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/Aphasia/) is displayed.



Communication Boards

Many need a wheelchair AND a communication board



White Board

Please write your message

Write a word, draw a picture, or communicate without words; just like having paper & pen

\* Use Finger or Stylus  
\* 5 Colors, 4 Widths  
\* Easy Save & Export


AlphaTopics AAC

TactusTherapy

Other apps for smartphones and tablets



The image shows the 'SmallTalk Intensive Care' app by Lingraphica. On the left is the app's box art, which features a cartoon illustration of a patient in a hospital bed with medical equipment. The text on the box includes 'Lingraphica The Aphasia Company' and 'SmallTalk Intensive Care'. To the right, a teal rounded rectangle contains the text 'Apps for tablets and smartphones'. Below this, a tablet and a smartphone are shown displaying the app's interface, which includes a cartoon character and the text 'I am in pain'.



The image shows a screenshot of 'The Aphasia Center' website. The main heading is 'Wallet Aphasia Identification Card'. Below this is a form with fields for Name, Address, Emergency contact, Phone, and Cause. There are also checkboxes for language preferences and a section for 'Check the boxes that apply' with various communication needs. A 'Print' button is at the bottom left. On the right side of the form, there is a 'Please Read This' section with text about aphasia and a 'To help me:' section. A 'Subscribe to our mailing list' form is at the bottom right. An orange rounded rectangle with the text 'Pocket Cards Personalized to the patient's needs' is overlaid on the right side of the form.

<http://theaphasiacenter.com/pocket-card/>



## Smartphone Safety Skills

TEACH your  
patients on their  
own smartphone

- Emergency SOS
- Contacts
- Health App



## Visual Tools to Explain Aphasia to Professionals and Families

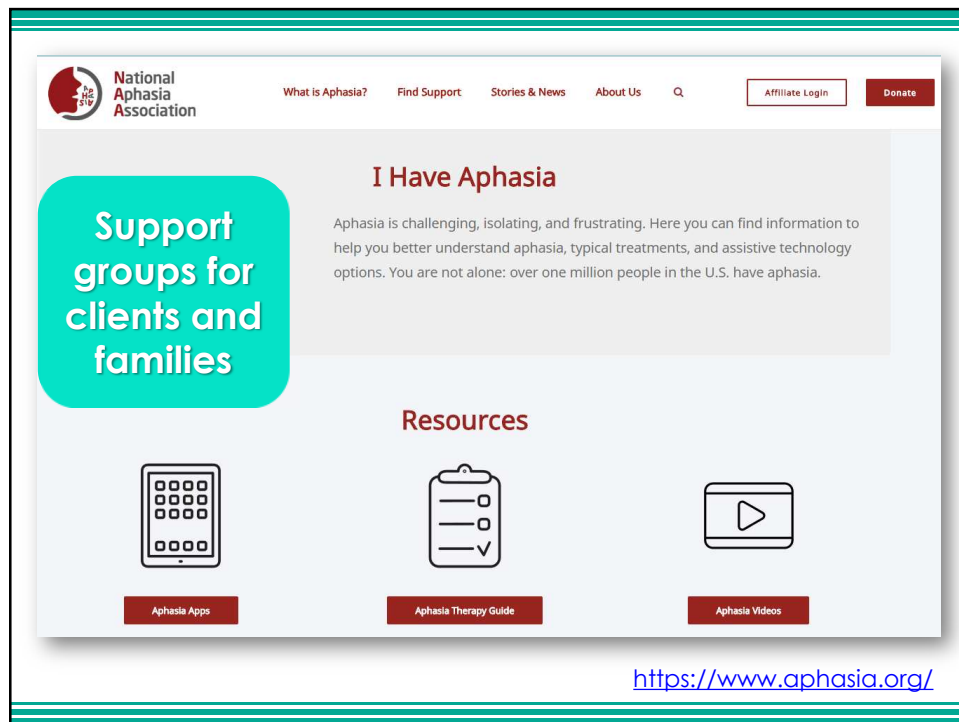


The Aphasia Store

Aphasia Institute  
of Toronto

[www.aphasia.ca](http://www.aphasia.ca)





## Tips

You probably already know them...

The real question is,  
does the **family** know them?  
does the **hospital staff**?

**We need to build bridges to  
communication for people with aphasia**

- No background noise (turn the TV off)
- Draw for me (whiteboard or clipboard)
- Give family information on being good communication partners
- Give family a handout
- Show me apps I might be able to use
- Tell nurse's station I cannot communicate so I cannot use the call button to speak
- Talk to ME and look at ME when you are talking; many people with aphasia complain of "feeling invisible"



Together, we can make a difference in the lives of those dealing with aphasia.

**PATIENT SAFETY** requires the staff to be effective communicators and support patients across the services of a complex medical system.

**EMPOWER PATIENTS**

What will **you** add to your toolbox?



*How can you improve the hospital experience for patients with aphasia?*

What matters next is your **commitment to translate ideas into action.**

On behalf of people with aphasia, I ask that together we create change and improvement to improve the status quo.

Together, we can.



**Carol Dow-Richards,  
Caregiver**

**David Dow,  
Stroke Survivor**



**John Schultz, MD  
Doctor**

**Caregivers  
People with aphasia  
Doctors and nurses  
Rehab team**

**Teamwork  
It takes a village**

## Handouts

- ✓ Share w/ staff
- ✓ Share w/ pts.



- ❑ Create patient [self-advocacy sheets](#)
- ❑ Download [basic information about aphasia](#)
- ❑ Find [apps](#) for [hospital communication](#)
- ❑ Find a [whiteboard app](#)
- ❑ Print a [personalized wallet card](#) for patient
- ❑ Help patients find [support groups](#) or resources



## Thank You

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### Improving Functional Outcomes in Aphasia

**ONLINE CONFERENCE | December 5–17, 2018**

Learn more at [asha.org/events/aphasia](https://asha.org/events/aphasia)