Conversation partner training in a group setting with spouses of persons with aphasia

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Purpose
- To test a Swedish adaptation of a communication training program.
- To try out a protocol for assessment of changes in conversational interaction.
- To explore important characteristics of the conversation partner (CP) that might be needed to facilitate change in communication.

Background
Several studies indicate that conversation partner training (CPT) to persons with aphasia (PWA) might positively affect communication.

The program Supporting Partners of People with Aphasia in Relationships and Conversation (SPPARC) includes a CPT program (Lock, Wilkinson & Bryan, 2001). The key objectives of SPPARC are raising the participants’ awareness of their own communication patterns and supporting the development of functional strategies.

Method
Three dyads with persons with aphasia and their spouses participated.

An explorative case-series design was used with baseline, treatment phase and follow-up 12 weeks post treatment.

Video-recordings of natural conversation was collected repeatedly in all three phases.

Intervention with SPPARC conversation partner training program was performed in a group setting.

Comprehension and word fluency of PWA and psychological wellbeing of PWA and CP was used as control measures.

Executive functions of the CP was investigated as descriptive measures of CP characteristics.

Results
Five of the six participants rated functional communication higher at follow-up than at baseline.

The results of the blinded analysis of video-recordings matched the reports of changes in perceived functional communication.

The improved communication could not be explained by changes in PWA’s word fluency or comprehension, neither by changes in psychological well-being in PWA or CP.

The test-results indicated deviations in aspects of executive function in the spouse (CP1) who showed no positive change in communication after intervention.

Conclusions and take home message
A Swedish version of the CPT provided in SPPARC is applicable in a group setting.

The outcome measures succeeded in capturing small changes in interaction.

Executive functions of the CP could have an impact on training outcome.

References

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