ACQ INTERNET COLUMN

Webwords 6: Acquired communication disorders

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"Acquiring", "acquisition" and "acquired" are apposite words for speech-language pathologists. "Acquiring" came in jolly handy, for example, when the *ACQ* (*Australian Communication Quarterly*) was distilled into a three-times-a-year clinical and professional extravaganza cleverly retaining the name, but with the subscript *ACQuiring knowledge in speech, language and hearing*. We use the term "language acquisition" to cover a miraculous, unfolding process that is not just about learning a skill, but that involves multi-layered interconnections between innate capacities, maturation, development and environmental influences. Then we speak of "acquired communication disorders", where "acquired" also has subtle nuances and connotations, reflecting the complexity of what occurs, why it occurs, and how, when normal language function is disrupted in a range of ways.

These *ways* include stroke **http://www.neuro.wustl.edu/stroke/**, trauma **http://www.tbims.org/** and other brain injuries **http://www.braincenter.org/**, tumours **http://www.abta.org/**, and diseases of the central and peripheral nervous systems **http://www.soc-neuro-onc.org/**. Children **http://www.hemikids.org/strokes.htm**, young people **http://www.differentstrokes.co.uk/** and mature individuals **http://www.ninds.nih.gov/** are all represented in this special population that have "got something they didn't have before" in the form of aphasia, dysarthria or dyspraxia. Among the informational websites that deal with acquired communication disorders are an ASHA article on adult aphasia **http://www.asha.org/consumers/brochures/adult_aphasia.htm**, neurology links from MedWeb Plus **http://www.medwebplus.com/subject/Neurology.html**, Sandy and Liz Herring **http://www.herring.org/neuro.html**, and the Hardin Library (in the person of Eric Rumsey) at the University of Iowa **http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/hardin/md/neuro.html**. The Society for Neuroscience **http://www.sfn.org/** database devotes a section to information about disorders and diseases **http://www.sfn.org/briefings/info_dis_disease.html**. Additionally, there are over one hundred sites and thousands of hyperlinks in the NeuroRing **http://www.pitt.edu/**

~mattf/NeuroRing.html and at the Child Neurology Home Page **http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/child-neuro/index.html**. Students are well provided for with neuroscience online exams and resources **http://www.mhri.edu.au/%7Enab/neuroresac_3.html** and the neuroguide **http://www.mhri.edu.au/%7Enab/index.html**. For the historians among us, Dr Heidi Roth's account of the early history of aphasiology **http://www.medinfo.ufl.edu/other/histmed/roth/** is irresistible.

Kath Vidler (left), Evelyn Terris (right) and Caroline Bowen (standing)

Conference logs on

Internet history was made at the New Zealand Speech and Language Therapists' biennial in April 2000, and the 300 plus participants acquired a few wrinkles! It was a lot of fun in Napier enjoying Hawkes Bay hospitality, and doing a three-day presentation. It included an on-line (*mostly* – the server bumped me off mid-sentence at one point!) demonstration of the Internet for speech and language therapists, hands-on tutorials covering WYSIWYG and HTML website building for beginners, and the highly successful NZSTA Internet Café that ran for the duration of the conference.

Among the participants were the NZSTA president Evelyn Terris and Speech Pathology Australia president Kath Vidler (pictured). *ACQ* readers may be interested to see the site built for the NZSTA conference, including the tutorial outline, accessible from the association's links page **http://www.nzsta-speech.org.nz/links.htm**. It was a novel experience to see colleagues surfing en masse. Whatever their work setting, the common thread between the clinicians was that they wanted intervention information, ideas and resources, though many of the "adult" therapists were interested in Martha Taylor Sarno's live chat transcript entitled Living with Aphasia **http://webmd.lycos.com/content/asset/chat_transcript.526505**.

Intervention

Carol Bishop's Speech Sounds on Cue **http://www.mmsp.com.au/** and the interactive dysphasia React Program **http://www.propeller.net/react/** and materials from Bungalow Software **http://www.teleport.com/~bungalow/** can all be ordered on-line. The neurology web forums at **http://neuro-mancer.mgh.harvard.edu/cgi-bin/Ultimate.cgi** provide opportunities for discussion of 117 specific neurological conditions and 24 general subjects.

There is a sense in cyberspace that speech pathologists are only just starting to discover the potential of the web and multimedia as intervention tools. Sketchpad **http://www.nova.edu/~vertesa/**, the creation of Alissa Vertes and Kristy Weissling, speech pathologists at Nova Southeastern University, is one example. Sketchpad allows patients from anywhere with neurogenic communication disorders to display their creative writing (something my colleague Freida van Staden is also doing with children with literacy difficulties **http://members.tripod.com/Freida_vanStaden/CreativeWriting.htm**). If readers know of other worthwhile intervention resources for acquired communication disorders, let me know **cbowen@tig.com.au**, and I will list them progressively in the electronic version of this article at **www.slpsite.com**.