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Anomia

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What is Anomia?

Anomic aphasia (Anomia) is a type of aphasia characterized by the consistent inability to recall the appropriate word to identify an object, a person's name, or numbers.



Anomia is a deficit of expressive language (ability to communicate verbally or nonverbally), but the person's receptive language (understanding words and gestures) is not impaired. It also applies to writing as well as speaking, as the person can sometimes recall the word/name when given clues. Persons with anomia typically exhibit fluent, grammatically correct speech but often speak in a roundabout way in order to avoid a name or express a certain word they cannot recall. Examples of anomia include: difficulty naming something that's right in front of you ("pen"), difficulty saying who or what is in a picture ("fire fighter"), or not being able to provide the appropriate word during conversation ("I'm going to").

Causes

Anomia can occur after an injury to the language areas of the brain such as:

- Stroke—most common cause
- Traumatic head injury
- Brain tumor
- Brain infection
- Dementia
- Other brain conditions



Types of Anomia

- **Lexical Anomia** occurs when a patient knows how to use an object and can correctly select the target object from a group of objects, but cannot provide the name of the object. Some patients with word selection anomia may exhibit selective impairment in naming particular types of objects, such as animals or colors.
- **Phonological Anomia (Conduction Aphasia)** occurs when a patient knows the word he/she wants to say, but selects the wrong sounds when producing the word. Long words will be especially difficult to pronounce.

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- **Semantic Anomia** is a disorder in which the meaning of words becomes lost. Unlike patients with word lexical anomia, patients with semantic anomia are unable to select the correct object from a group of objects, even when provided the name of the target object.

Treatment

Therapists can treat anomia using several different methods, and it is important to find the ones that work best for the family of the loved one affected by aphasia. The ultimate goal is to increase the independence of the person with aphasia. In order to do this, the patient needs to be able to do as much as possible on his/her own.



A Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) can help preserve the language skills the patient has, try to restore those that are lost, and assist in discovering new ways of communicating.

Speech Therapy activities may include:

- Using writing or gestures to cue word retrieval
- Using flash cards with pictures and words to help name objects
- Repeating words back to the therapist
- Using computer programs designed to improve speech, hearing, reading, and writing

Some activities used to help with word retrieval:

- Giving first sound/first letter
- Asking questions about the meaning of the word
- Pointing to a picture that corresponds to a particular word from a choice of several pictures
- Using structured fill-in-the-blank sentences (I don't want salt, I want _____).

Life with Anomic Aphasia

Anomic aphasia can be extremely frustrating for people with and without the disorder because it creates communication breakdowns. Although patients with anomic aphasia may know a specific word, they may not be able to recall it, and this can be very difficult and uncomfortable for everyone involved in a conversation. Most caregivers start providing the words for their loved ones. This may make conversations easier; however, it also creates a cycle of dependence on the caregiver. It is extremely important to have patience and work with the patient until he or she gains confidence with his or her speech. Positive reinforcements are very helpful.



References

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