PLORAS Newsletter

Predicting Language Outcome and Recovery After Stroke
Issue 2 | September 2013

Hello again!

We hope you had an enjoyable summer.

The PLORAS Research Team have had a busy few months - read on to find out more!

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New website

In June, we launched our PLORAS website. The site has two sections; one aimed at stroke survivors, their families and carers, and the other is aimed at health professionals and academics. There is information about the research and how to get involved, stories from previous volunteers, frequently asked questions, videos, events listings, and much more!

Take a look here: www.ucl.ac.uk/ploras
Events

UK Stroke Assembly
On 31st May-1st June, we exhibited at this Stroke Association event in Nottingham.

We had lots of interest from stroke survivors. We look forward to welcoming volunteers to our centre in the coming months.

Action on Stroke Month
In May, we exhibited and presented at several events as part of the Stroke Association’s Action on Stroke Month.

It was another great opportunity to meet stroke survivors, and find out about latest developments and services available for stroke survivors and their families.

British Aphasiology Society Research Update Meeting
In April, we presented an overview of the project and latest findings to health professionals and academics at this event at Exeter University.

As always, it was great to meet with other people who are passionate about working to improve the lives of people with aphasia.

See our website for more events, including upcoming events.
Research update

Functional MRI scanning (fMRI)

We have started the new fMRI part of our project with stroke survivors who have aphasia.

In fMRI, patients do tasks (such as naming pictures and repeating words) in the scanner. We can see which parts of the brain are used for different tasks, by measuring blood flow to the brain (more blood flow = more brain activity).

We look for two things in the brains of stroke survivors who have made a good recovery of language: 1) Do they use other (non-language) areas of the brain? 2) Do they use the remaining language areas but with more effort (is there more blood flow?)

Both help to explain how and why some people recover language after a stroke.

Focus groups

We have run three focus groups:

- One for health professionals, which included stroke consultants and speech and language therapists.

- Two for people with aphasia who are members of Speakeasy (an aphasia charity). The first group was for feedback on the research and the second group was for website feedback.

We had lots of valuable feedback from all the groups.
Spotlight on...Suz Prejawa, Research Assistant

Suz is involved in:

- **Scanning patients** and **healthy people**.
- **Preparing** the **scans** so they can be used by the rest of the team.

She has spent a lot of time **developing the new fMRI experiment** and is now looking at **what the results mean** with her colleagues.

Suz trained as a **speech and language therapist** and then completed an **MSc in Neuroscience, Communication and Language**.

Recruitment update

We now have over **600 stroke survivors** in the study!

We will soon be recruiting through the **Stroke Research Network** (a UK network with links in NHS hospitals), as well as giving our **regular presentations at stroke groups**.

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