Posterior Cortical Atrophy (PCA) is a visual variant of dementia involving a ‘progressive decline in visuospatial, visuoperceptual, literacy & praxic skills’ (Crutch et al., 2012), estimated to affect around 5% of the Alzheimer’s (AD) population (Snowdon et al., 2007). Qualitative research capturing the everyday experiences of those with PCA compared to typical AD is needed, given recent quantitative data suggesting those with PCA are significantly more impaired in everyday functional abilities (Shakespeare et al., 2015). This doctoral project offers an in-depth exploration of the mealtime activity aiming to understand how individual symptoms affect everyday functioning during meals and the types of environmental strategies individuals and spousal carers use to cope with this day-to-day activity at home.

The ICF Model, WHO (2001):

- Health Condition (Dementia)
- Body Functions & Structures (PCA vs. tAD)
- Activity (Mealtime)
- Participation (Eating/Social)
- Personal Factors
- Environmental (Physical/Social/Attitudinal)

Theoretically informed by the ICF framework (WHO, 2001) whereby the environment has a ‘facilitating/hindering’ impact on everyday activity functioning. Project explores similarities and differences in difficulties with interacting with the external environment during mealtimes, and in the way environmental strategies are used to compensate for difficulties. Informing future intervention development (with UCL) targeted at the physical/social/attitudinal environment.

Sample:


Aiming To:

Explore the difficulties and compensatory strategies used during mealtimes; comparing the experiences of those with typical Alzheimer’s disease and Posterior Cortical Atrophy and their spousal caregivers.

Some Emerging Themes: Stage 1

- Difficulties: adjusting to a changing identity, drawing back from social situations, increasing difficulties in managing food items on plate & losing motivation/interest in food.
- Coping Strategies: comparing to others situations, carer anticipating and responding to challenges, routined mealtime structures, adapting utensils/meal type environment & providing music etc.

This project is sponsored by a ESRC/NIHR project with UCL: ‘Seeing What They See’ aiming to understand the functional impact of dementia related visual impairment and to develop supportive home based interventions.