Speech and Language Disorders

Speech & Language Problems

- Speech and language disorders are an inability to speak, understand, read, or write.
  - Can occur at any age
  - Not an inability to understand another language

- Causes
  - Genetic problems
  - Brain injury
    - Accident, infection, drug abuse, stroke,
  - Disease
  - Hearing Loss
  - Brain tumour
  - Problems with speech

Aphasia

- Aphasia is the partial or total loss of speech and language skills caused by brain injury.

- Common causes are:
  - Stroke (CVA)
  - Head injury
  - Brain infections
  - Cancer

- Three types of aphasia:
  - Receptive aphasia
  - Expressive aphasia
  - Some people have both expressive and receptive aphasia.

- The client with aphasia has many emotional needs.
Receptive Aphasia

- Receptive aphasia
  - Difficulty understanding language both spoken and written words
  - Difficulty understanding what is said or read
    - Cannot understand their own words
    - Speech is mixed up or “muddled”
    - Clients make up or use wrong words, but are not aware of their mistakes.

Expressive Aphasia

- Expressive aphasia
  - Difficulty speaking and writing
  - Can understand spoken and written words, but their speech is jumbled or slurred and difficult to understand
  - Think one thing but say another
    - Cannot think of the right word or put the right sounds together to form words or sentences
  - May leave out connecting words
    - Very aware of their mistakes because they can understand what they are saying
  - Leads to frustration/depression

Expressive-Receptive Aphasia

- Expressive-receptive aphasia
  - Difficulty speaking and understanding language
  - Some clients can only say “yes”, “no”, and make sounds such as “da da”
  - Other clients with expressive-receptive aphasia may have lost all speech and language skills.
Apraxia

- The client with apraxia of speech cannot use the speech muscles to produce understandable speech.
  - The client understands speech and knows what to say.
  - The brain cannot coordinate the speech muscles to make the words – lip, jaw or tongue movements.
- Apraxia is caused by damage to the motor speech area in the brain.
  - Difficult to understand – speech is usually slow
  - Inconsistent speech is common
  - Difficult to put words in the right order, or find words

Dysarthria

- Dysarthria – difficulty speaking clearly
  - It is caused by weakness or paralysis in the muscles used for speech.
- Common causes:
  - Cerebral palsy
  - Multiple sclerosis
  - Head injury
  - Tumour
  - Infection
- Clients may have slurred speech and speak in flat, harsh, or nasal tones.
  - Problems forming words, spacing their words
  - Speech errors are usually consistent and predictable – you may become familiar with client’s speech.

Emotional Effects

- Communication – important for functioning and for maintaining relationships with others
- Difficulty in communication may lead to:
  - Avoiding social situations
  - Avoiding friends, family
  - Extreme stress
  - Loss of employment
  - Difficulties doing routine tasks – shopping, paying bills
Treatment of Speech Disorders

- Some clients need speech therapist.
  - The goal is to improve the person’s ability to communicate.
  - The amount of improvement possible depends on many factors.
    - The cause, amount, and area of brain damage
    - The client’s age and health
    - The client’s willingness and ability to learn
  - A speech-language pathologist and other health team members help the person:
    - Improve affected language skills.
    - Use remaining abilities.
    - Restore language abilities to the extent possible.
    - Learn other methods of communicating.
    - Strengthen the muscles of speech.

Communication Aids

- Communication boards
  - Boards with pictures or words that show functions or task
  - Related to activities of daily living
  - Client points to the things he or she needs
- Mechanical and electronic devices
  - Client touches a picture and the message is then voiced, or printed on a screen.

Use of Computers

- Electronic devices use a combination of screen reading, magnification systems and alternate input methods.
  - Can speak for the user
  - Type in the correct words
  - Identify symbols that represent the words
  - Speech synthesizer
- Invaluable in improving the client’s quality of life
Communicating with Clients

- Follow the care plan – incorporate DIPPS.
- Use communication methods that are best for your client.
- Be mindful of your facial expression – you can reflect your impatience or frustration.
- Be alert for signs of client fatigue – drooping shoulder, irritability, lack of interest, decline in understanding.
- Always try to include client in conversation.