

# UCL Communication Clinic Newsletter

## In this newsletter:

Review of Research Projects conducted at Chandler House 2015-16.....	2
A Stitch of Time .....	5
My experience with Connect.....	6
News in brief .....	7
Clinic Christmas.....	8
Thursday morning support group in the press.....	100
Talking to Doctors.....	11
Drawing Group.....	11
Steve's son at the Olympics.....	12



## Review of Research Projects conducted at Chandler House 2015-16

Caroline Newton and I would like to take this opportunity to thank people attending the clinic who contributed to a number of studies we supervised last year. These studies not only form an important part of the students' training, but also give us an opportunity to explore key clinical issues.

### **Do subtitles support understanding of connected speech?**

**What people did:** Three individuals, who reported having difficulties understanding people when they spoke, completed a home therapy programme. This involved watching excerpts from David Attenborough's films about the natural world with subtitles and then answering a series of questions.



**What we found:** Following three weeks of therapy, all participants were found to have made a positive change in at least one aspect of their cognitive-linguistic performance when subtitles were not being used: single-word auditory processing, auditory comprehension and attention or memory skills.

**What this means:** This type of therapy could be beneficial for other people with aphasia.

### **Does emotional valence affect word recognition in people with aphasia?**

**What people did:** Forty people took part in this study, 20 people with and 20 people without aphasia. Participants had to decide whether a written word was real or not.

**What we found:** People with aphasia were faster and more accurate recognising emotionally valenced words. They performed best for words with positive valence (e.g. 'peace') than negative (e.g. crime) or neutral valence (e.g. note). People without aphasia were faster but no more accurate when words were positively valenced.

**What this means:** These types of words should be considered when designing assessments and choosing word lists for therapy.

### **Do primes for action and happiness make you perform better on language and cognitive tasks?**

**What people did:** Twenty individuals without and 20 individuals with aphasia took part in the study. They completed activities that primed them for one of two conditions (action + happiness vs. inaction + sadness). They then performed four different tasks: grammaticality judgement, synonym judgement, speed test and memory. This was repeated following priming for the alternative condition.

**What we found:** People with aphasia were less sensitive to effects of priming than people without aphasia. When priming had an effect, people with aphasia were more hindered by inaction primes (e.g. the word 'tired'), than helped by action primes (e.g. the word 'lively'). In contrast, order of presentation had a noticeable effect. People with aphasia were significantly faster on their second attempt.

**What this means:** The findings highlight the importance of providing practice items before testing.



### Can a number sequencing app improve sequencing and number skills in people with aphasia?

**What people did:** Five adults who had problems with numbers in daily life were given a tablet containing an app called 'SWAN' to work with at home. They were asked to play the number sequencing game every day for two weeks.

**What we found:** Following this experience significant changes were found in the average scores of sequencing and numeracy tasks. Although the pattern of improvement varied for individuals, everyone showed positive changes. They all completed sequencing tasks faster and generally used fewer strategies.

**What this means:** The app may help some people with acquired numeracy problems.

### What are numeracy skills like in people with aphasia and can these be evaluated by a subjective numeracy measure?

**What people did:** The performance of twelve adults with and without aphasia were compared on formal tests of numeracy and on self-perception measures of numeracy ability.

**What we found:** People with aphasia did less well on the numeracy tests than people without aphasia. They had problems solving equations of various forms and maths in everyday life. The subjective numeracy measure was effective in identifying individuals with numeracy difficulties.

**What this means:** The subjective measure of numeracy could be a useful tool to avoid additional testing.

Carolyn Bruce, Director of UCL Communication Clinic

# A Stitch of Time

On Wednesday 2nd November, staff and guests (including stroke survivors) were invited to attend a reading and questions & answers session with Lauren Marks.

Lauren suffers with aphasia after an aneurysm ruptured in her brain. She was 27 when she suffered the injury and her ability to communicate and understand was affected. Speaking, reading and writing was severely affected and she had to start all aspects of her life again. As a theatre producer and actor her life was devastated.

Lauren spoke about her frustration because she could not use the language that was vital in her professional and private life. She felt her identity had been stolen and replaced by a completely alien person. Some people do not appreciate the high value of communication until it is lost. Luckily, her memory was intact but she would have to relearn everything again.

However, with top class medical treatment and therapy, she was able to put her life back together and slowly improved. Lauren recovered so well that she is now a mother and she was able to write her book, *A Stitch OF Time*, about her experience in hospital and the recovery in herself since.

Lauren read extracts of her book and answered questions from the audience. Some of the members could relate to Lauren's story. On the whole, it was an entertaining evening and hopefully her book will sell enough for the publishers to make an audio version available for people who can't easily read a book.



Stan Spinks

## My experience with Connect

**Connect, the communication disability network, closed on 31st October 2016**

After my stroke in 2001 I had speech therapy at home. A former colleague recommended that I visit Connect and I started attending regularly a year later. It was my first experience of meeting a number of other people with aphasia. Tom, a staff member, introduced me to others but I was uncertain until I had practised the names at home. I came prepared to ask, "Arthur, how are you?", to greet a Nigerian with "Ekwaro" and a German with "Wie geht's?" We learnt to communicate with mime, photos and drawing. Inhibition disappeared. We were all in the same boat. We learnt to take time, to try different ways of communicating and to be patient with each other.

As well as a socialising area there were rooms for different activities. Initially I was in the music group. We played music for each other and communicated why we liked or disliked it. We had the chance to play the gamelan at the RFH and also worked with a composer there to make our own music. We had art workshops and sessions at Tate Modern and the Portrait Gallery. Confidence developed in sharing perceptions and contributing in different situations. A photography group heightened my ability to see and my photos are now part of how I communicate.



*Work produced in the art workshops*

*Workshop at the National Portrait Gallery*



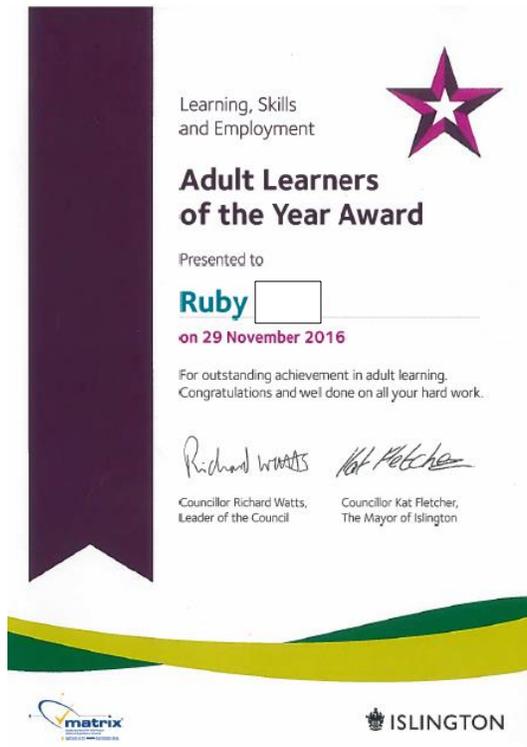
For a long time I was angry at losing the five languages that I had spoken and I wished to die. I felt so useless. Listening to other aphasic sufferers and talking to the Connect counsellor helped me develop the confidence to reach out to others who had lost more than I had and to communicate in every way possible. At Connect I was always treated as valuable so I tried to pass that on. Connect gave me opportunities to help newcomers, visit aphasia sufferers in their homes and to give feedback to speech therapists in training.

Connect published an invaluable book – The Stroke and Aphasia handbook. Clear text and drawings illustrate every point regarding the nature of a stroke and aphasia – causes, issues over medication, movement, vision and pain as well as emotional or intellectual problems. It describes the communication difficulties of people with aphasia but accents how they are competent adults who know what they want to say.

I know I never shall write the books I had planned but I can attend a local art class and sing in a choir. Because of Connect I have a life. The three chief executives: Phyllis Campbell-McRae, Sally Byng and Sally McVicker – What brilliant work you've done. And what a loss Connect closing is.

*Michael Hussey*

## News in brief



Well done to Ruby, who received an Adult Learner of the Year Award from Islington Council. She received the award from the mayor at a ceremony at the Town Hall.

## Bloomsbury Festival

Artwork from two UCL Communication Clinic clients went on show at the Bloomsbury Festival in October 2016. A number of students currently on placement at the Clinic volunteered at the event alongside members of UCLU Giving Voice, a society aimed at raising awareness of the work that speech and language therapists do. You can read all about how visitors to the arts event interacted with a number of exhibits illustrating life with aphasia at the Giving Voice blog <https://uclugivingvoiceblog.wordpress.com/2016/10/27/lost-and-found-uclu-giving-voice-helping-out-at-the-bloomsbury-festival-2016/>



*Photo courtesy of UCLU Giving Voice*



## Clinic Christmas

There was lots of festive cheer at the Clinic Christmas parties in December.

A highlight was the Christmas quiz! Members got together in teams and battled it out for prizes.



Team	Round 1	Round 2
1. The forgotten ones	6	5 (11)
2. The Trumps	9½	8 (9½)
3. The all stars	8	7½ (15½)
4. Adam's team.	6	6½ (12½)

Another highlight was a speech from Derrick, a member of the clinic. He shared his experience of having a stroke and why communication is so important to him during Christmas.

On Thursday we had a musical performance from Pedro, another member of the clinic. He was also joined by members of the UCL Giving Voice Choir. They put on a great show and got us all singing along!



**Thank you** to all those who joined us and contributed.

It was a great way to kick off Christmas!

We asked Pedro about his experience...

### **How did you find playing at the Christmas Party?**

*"Yes, it was a bit difficult. Some of the songs were, they were easy. But some of them were a little bit difficult...But the Christmas songs, White Christmas you know, they were not too bad cause I know it. Also what I did, I picked, you actually, all of us, picked 5 songs but what I did, I learnt seven songs just in case if somebody says, "okay, come on, have another one".*

### **Did you enjoy playing guitar for everyone?**

*"Yes, that was good. And I was looking all around the hall and I could see everyone is trying to singing and all that. So it was good fun, like, you know. And the choir also was good."*

### **Did you enjoy playing at the party?**

*"I enjoy it, yeah. It was nice to....some of the people I've never met before so it's good to know people. And it was nice just speaking with people, like, yeah. I just enjoyed being with everybody."*

Pedro plays with a band who love to perform. If you want to get in contact with them please speak to Michael Dean at the clinic for more details on email: [communicationclinic@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:communicationclinic@ucl.ac.uk) or phone: 020 7679 4239.

## Thursday morning support group in the press

Members of the Thursday morning support group wrote a letter to *Camden New Journal*. Their letter was published on 16 February 2017.

### Why did you, the group, write the letter to *Camden New Journal*?

"To draw attention to people about aphasia and the cuts to aftercare."

"Wanted the MP to do something about it."

### How do you feel about up your letter being published?

"It's a good start. Need it in other papers and media too."

"Team effort! All the people in the group helped to write the letter including the student speech and language therapists and some family members."



## Talking to Doctors



*This was written by Debbie, who has been attending the clinic for the past year. Debbie hand wrote this with assistance from a Dragon Dictation app to copy words that she could not spell.*

Recently I saw a hospital doctor regularly because my mother was unwell.

I find it hard to talk to doctors. It is hard to understand what they are talking about because they talk quickly.

When I go up and see the doctors, I need somebody to come with me to understand what they are talking about.

It is difficult to speak to different doctors because they expect you to say everything all over again.

It would be nice if we could see a doctor to speak slowly and using simple words and not big words. Also, it would be helpful if the doctors write it all down so that I don't forget what they said. Doctors do not have enough time so I do not ask them to repeat over again.

In the future, I should show the doctors my stroke card. Then they may know what to do to help me understand.

## Adam's Drawing Group

Adam attends a monthly drawing group at the National Portrait Gallery. During the sessions an artist is on hand to support members to copy a particular painting or sculpture and interpret it in their own way. The helpers are professional artists or students who are good at communicating. Different materials are used including pencils and pens but not chalk as this can blow away and land on pictures in the gallery. Anyone can attend the group and it's open to all abilities. There are usually about 10-15 people at each meeting. Adam used to attend the group through Connect but now it is run independently of Connect.



# Steve's son at the Olympics

My name is Steve and my wife's name is Angela. I had my stroke 5 years ago. After my stroke, I found it hard to communicate. I started at the UCL Clinic in October and have been working on my communication skills.

Angela and I have two children, Tom and Kerry. Our son Tom started playing rugby as a child and has always been sporty. At secondary school, Tom started rowing. In 2009 Tom started training for the London 2012 Olympics. We went to Eton Dorney to watch him win a Bronze medal for Team GB in the men's Eight. They row for 2000m.



**Team GB Men's Eight competing in the London 2012 Olympics.**

In August 2016, me Angela and our daughter Kerry went to Rio for the Olympics. We watched lots of sports including boxing, cycling, karate, rowing, rugby 7s, taekwondo and water polo.

We went to Rio because Tom represented Team GB. We watched him in the heats and in the final where he won a gold medal. We watched from the sides, with our hands in the air cheering from the sides. The podium where the team got their medals was right in front of where we were seated. Angela and I were so proud!



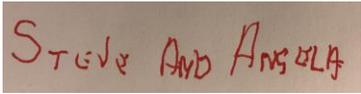
**Steve with his son Tom wearing his gold medal.**

After the Olympics, we travelled around Brazil with friends and went to Iguazu Falls – which was very good. Tom and the team are now training for the World Championships in 2019.

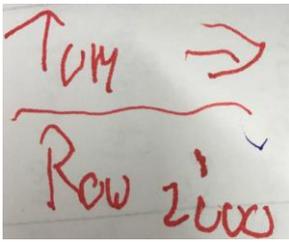
Continued overleaf...

Steve was able to share his story about his holiday to Rio using his speech, reading, writing, drawing and gesture. Here are some examples of his writing and drawing that supported him to get his message across.

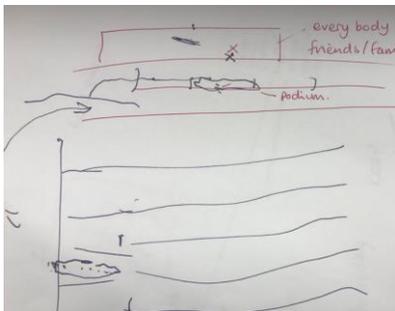
---



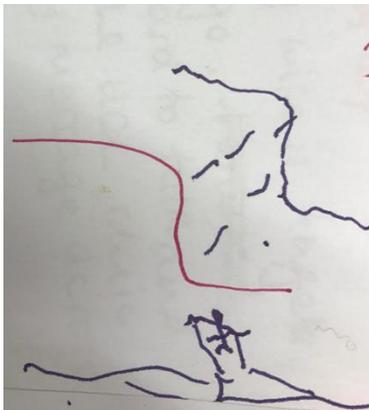
Steve using his writing to describe who he went to Rio with.



Steve using his writing to describe what his son did in the Olympics.



Steve using drawing to describe where he was stood whilst watching Tom compete in the Olympics.



Steve describing where he went after the Olympics had finished.