

## **Aphasia at BGSU: CDIS Faculty Member Brent Archer Studies Group Therapy for Aphasia.**

**By Audra DeLaney**

You are at the hospital and you aren't sure why. Slowly, you realize you can't feel the right side of your body. A doctor enters the room and tells you that you have suffered a stroke. You regain your motor skills, but are left with difficulty speaking and understanding. Your doctor suggests group therapy.

Group therapy is a proven way to treat aphasia, a communication disorder caused by brain damage resulting from a stroke or traumatic brain injury. Dr. Brent Archer, certified speech language pathologist and BGSU communication sciences and disorders professor, is the leading researcher for a study on aphasia group therapy.

“Aphasia can affect your ability to speak and your ability to understand what other people are saying around you,” he said. “For some people it affects their reading or writing. The effects of everybody's aphasia are different.”

Archer said his research team focus is on group therapy's effects on patients depending on their type of aphasia and how the engagement of the therapy facilitator during group sessions impacts the patients.

According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, a milder form of aphasia is called anomic aphasia, which affects a person's ability to find words to create phrases. A more extreme form of aphasia, called global aphasia, severely affects a person's expressive and receptive abilities when it comes to communicating, although they may be able to do so through facial expressions, intonation and gestures. A number of other variations of aphasia fall between these two types.

Makayla Morgan, a sophomore communication sciences and disorders major, has been on Archer's research team since January.

She said the main goal of their research at this time is to transcribe therapy sessions of patients with aphasia. Each session of roughly seven people is videotaped.

"We write down everything they say and we include when they 'uh' or 'um' or if they pause because that's a big thing with those who have aphasia," she said. "I think eventually we will look at what the facilitator says and what the patients say but right now we are working on getting it all down."

Morgan said she can quickly tell the difference between those who have a mild form of aphasia and those with an extreme one.

"Some people talk pretty much fine but then there are other people who will take nine second pauses between their words and so it kind of sounds like they are choking out their words," she said. "It is clear that some of the patients are close to recovery while some of the people are not."

Archer said when someone has aphasia the main role of speech language pathologists is to help that person reconnect the parts of the brain associated with speech and understanding through activities like group therapy.

"They have a chance to communicate as well as the space to practice communicating and it helps improve their abilities quite a lot," Archer said. "You can also work with the families of people with aphasia, their spouses, children and whoever else communicates with them and you can teach them some skills where they can make it easier for the person with aphasia to communicate and they can make use of the abilities the person has left over."

Archer has worked with Jackie Davis Zychowicz, a woman with aphasia who is helping others with aphasia make use of their abilities through group therapy.

Zychowicz was a nurse for a local doctor when, while caring for a stroke survivor, she suffered a stroke herself.

She is the co-founder of the DaZy Aphasia Centre, a support group on the campuses of the University of Toledo and BGSU for those with aphasia.

According to BGSU's website, DaZy's main goal is to provide a space for those with aphasia and their family members to share in therapy, information and experiences related to their condition.

Zychowicz's husband, Frank, said group therapy is beneficial because it brings those with aphasia to a place where they can converse with each other and provides a space for relatives to learn how to better communicate with their loved one.

Archer said he enjoys studying group therapy for aphasia because group therapy is a place for people to rebuild their identity.

“They can see well ‘I can communicate, people do want to hear what I have to say, I can make it work, I have some skills left’,” Archer said. “This really makes a huge difference with people's self esteem.”

## Links

### Aphasia

- <http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/Aphasia/>
- The American Speech-Language- Hearing Association page describing Aphasia is commonality, treatments and more.

### Aphasia group therapy

- <http://tactustherapy.com/aphasia-group-therapy-apps/>
- An article on Aphasia group therapy and about adding internet applications (apps) into it.

### The DaZy Centre

- <https://www.bgsu.edu/health-and-human-services/programs/department-of-communication-sciences-and-disorders/clinic-infomation/DaZy-aphasia-centre.html>
- BGSU's website (and UT's) include things about the Dazy Aphasia Centre and the things each place offers to people with aphasia and their families.

## Sources

Dr. Brent Archer, speech language pathologist and BGSU communications sciences and disorders professor

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Frank Zychowicz, Jackie's husband

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American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)

- <http://www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Clinical-Topics/Aphasia/Common-Classifications-of-Aphasia/>

National Aphasia Association

- For infographic (also under it)
- <https://www.aphasia.org/aphasia-definitions/>

# Types of Aphasia

**Fluent?**

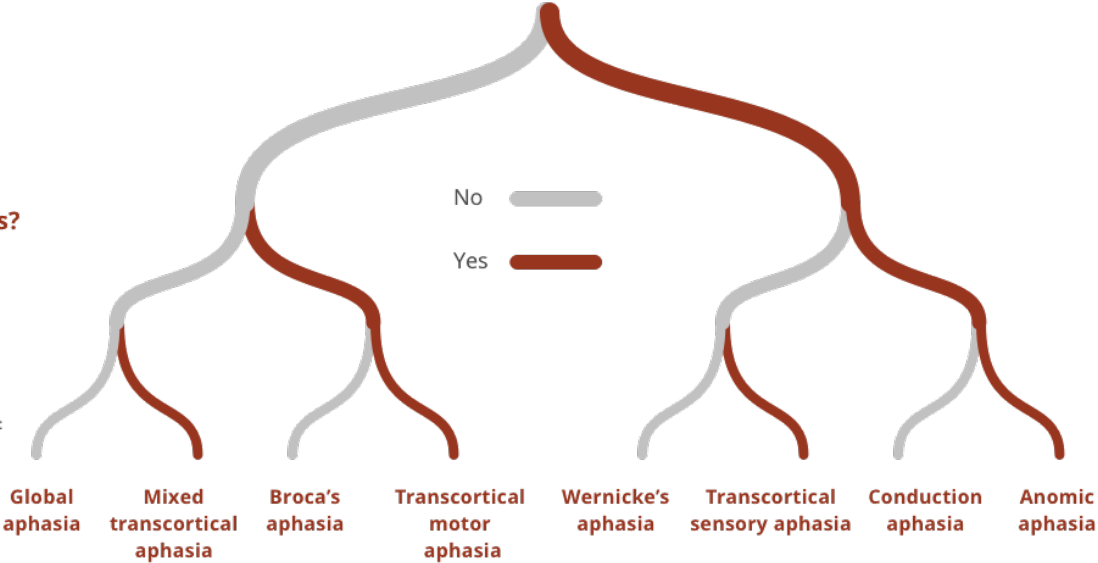
Is speech fluent?

**Comprehends?**

Can you comprehend of spoken messages?

**Repeats?**

Can the person repeat words or phrases?



www.aphasia.org

Source: National Aphasia Association  
<https://www.aphasia.org/aphasia-definitions/>