Press Release

New International Guidelines Aim to Transform Online Support for People Living with Aphasia

Cork, Ireland - A new international publication led by experts from around the world has established the first comprehensive best practice guidelines for online aphasia support groups, providing a roadmap for clinicians, community organisations, and support networks seeking to improve the lives of people living with aphasia. Dr Helen Kelly of the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences at University College Cork (UCC) played a key role in developing the guidelines and contributing practical resources to support their implementation. [kong-et-al...sia-groups | PDF]

The publication, Best Practice International Guidelines on Online Communities of Aphasia Groups, brings together contributions from an international team of clinicians, researchers, and community leaders with extensive experience in delivering online aphasia services. The guidelines were developed through a collaborative consensus process conducted between 2023 and 2025 and are published in the *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*. [kong-et-al...sia-groups | PDF]

Aphasia is a communication disorder, most commonly caused by stroke, that affects a person's ability to speak, understand, read, and write. Beyond communication difficulties, many people with aphasia experience social isolation, reduced participation in community life, and challenges to their psychological wellbeing. The new guidelines highlight how online support groups can provide vital opportunities for communication practice, peer support, and social connection, particularly for people who may be unable to access in-person services. [kong-et-al...sia-groups | PDF]

Among the paper's key findings are that online aphasia groups can increase accessibility, reduce isolation, support social participation, and contribute positively to mental wellbeing. The guidelines also provide practical recommendations for overcoming barriers such as technology challenges, participant engagement, accessibility needs, facilitator training, and sustainable funding. [kong-et-al...sia-groups | PDF]

Dr Helen Kelly was a member of the international writing team and made substantial contributions to the development of the guidelines. In particular, Dr Kelly co-developed a practical implementation checklist and planning template designed to help clinicians and organisations establish and run successful online aphasia support groups. The paper notes that the template was initially developed and organised by Dr Kelly together with co-authors Carol Dow-Richards and Sasha Yampolsky, before being refined through international expert review. [kong-et-al...sia-groups | PDF]

Dr Kelly's contribution builds on her longstanding work in aphasia support and social participation. The guidelines draw on evidence demonstrating the importance of meaningful social connections for people living with aphasia and emphasise that online communities can be life-changing for individuals who might otherwise have limited opportunities to connect with peers facing similar challenges. [kong-et-al...sia-groups | PDF]

"These guidelines recognise that communication is about much more than language recovery. It is about connection, identity, confidence and belonging. Online communities can provide a vital

gateway to participation and support for people with aphasia, regardless of where they live," said Dr Helen Kelly.*(Suggested quote for media use.)*

The publication arrives at a time when healthcare and community services are increasingly incorporating digital approaches to improve accessibility and long-term support. The authors conclude that online aphasia support groups represent a valuable and sustainable way to enhance communication outcomes, psychosocial wellbeing, and quality of life for people living with aphasia worldwide. [kong-et-al...sia-groups | PDF]

The work also highlights the importance of international collaboration, with contributors from Europe, North America, the Middle East, and Asia working together to share expertise and develop evidence-informed recommendations that can be adapted across different healthcare systems and cultural settings. [kong-et-al...sia-groups | PDF]

Publication

Best Practice International Guidelines on Online Communities of Aphasia Groups
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