

The Kevin Walsh Encouragement Award for Honours or Masters Research was awarded to Kyla Brown for the following presentation.

Service Industry Workers' Perceptions of Barriers and Facilitators for People With Aphasia in Their Community

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Within the World Health Organization International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), disability is recognised as an interaction between the individual's health condition and his or her personal and environmental factors. There has been little research identifying the environmental facilitators and barriers to participation for people with aphasia in the community. This study aimed to identify barriers and facilitators to community participation for adults with aphasia from the perspective of service industry workers. Eight focus groups were conducted with 24 service industry employees. Transcripts were analysed using qualitative content analysis procedures and barriers to and facilitators for participation of people with aphasia were identified. Three broad categories of barriers and facilitators were identified: (1) people environmental factors, such as people's awareness and assumptions about aphasia and their attitudes towards people with aphasia, (2) physical environmental factors, such as the use of written forms and technology, and (3) business or organisational environmental factors, such as the communicative demands of the business transaction, business attitudes and shop size. Service industry employees identified a range of barriers and facilitators for people with aphasia. Some of the more significant findings include the lack of awareness about aphasia, the willingness of service industry workers at the individual level to accommodate people with aphasia, and the difficulty in making the necessary system, policy, and procedural changes at the organisational level. Speech pathologists are encouraged to assist service industry providers to be more aphasia-friendly through education and training, in addition to assisting people with aphasia to become self-advocates.

The Luria Award for Doctoral Research was awarded to Julian J. Dooley for the following presentation.

The Measurement of Social Cognitive Functioning After Closed Head Injury

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Specific patterns of information processing have been strongly associated with negative behaviours like aggression. These patterns have been assessed using vignettes describing social interactions which instruct the participant to imagine being involved in the interaction. The cognitive abilities this method requires (e.g., working memory and verbal skills) precludes their use with certain groups; for example, those who have suffered a brain injury. These concerns

facilitated the development of BRAIN QUEST, a novel measure of social information processing. BRAIN QUEST is a computer-based measure that presents ambiguous social situations in video format. The participant is asked a series of open-ended questions that assess emotion regulation and the various stages of social information processing. The brief videos and accompanying questions can be completed by the participant without the researcher being present, reducing the influence of social desirability. Psychometric properties for the measure will be presented based on normative data from over 60 normally developing adolescents. Measures of positive and negative social behaviours will be compared to information processing patterns as measured by BRAIN QUEST. A sample of adolescent boys ($n = 15$) with a brain injury were compared to the normative group. Brain-injured adolescents reported greater feelings of anger, gave more aggressive responses and generated more socially inappropriate solutions to social problems. However, the brain-injured group did not rate themselves as being more aggressive. These results suggest that the brain-injured participants were unaware of their difficulties regulating negative emotions and believed themselves to be as socially skilled as their noninjured peers.

The ASSBI Travelling Award was awarded to Belinda Renison for the following presentation.

The Use of Virtual Reality in Assessment of Executive Function Following Traumatic Brain Injury

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Existing neuropsychological measures show limited capacity to detect executive dysfunction in some people with traumatic brain injury (TBI). Virtual reality paradigms have the potential to capture executive dysfunction in a more ecologically valid, sensitive and cost-effective manner. This study aimed to investigate the sensitivity and ecological validity of the Virtual Reality Office Task (VROT; Jansari, Agnew, Akesson, & Murphy, 2004), a new measure of executive dysfunction. Twenty TBI participants with reported executive problems and 20 controls matched for age, gender and educational background completed the VROT and 4 neuropsychological measures of executive function (Brixton Spatial Anticipation Test, Verbal Fluency, Modified Six Elements test, Zoo Map task). Significant others rated everyday executive function on the Dysexecutive Questionnaire (DEX). Results indicated that the groups did not differ significantly on measures of IQ or verbal memory. Despite the TBI group experiencing significantly more everyday executive problems than the control group, the groups did not differ significantly on performance on 3 of the 4 neuropsychological assessments of executive function, namely the Brixton Spatial Anticipation Test, the Verbal Fluency Test and the Zoo Map task. The TBI participants did perform significantly more poorly on the Modified Six Elements Test. Importantly, after controlling for IQ, verbal memory, education and performance on all of the neuropsychological measures of executive function, the TBI group performed significantly worse on the VROT than controls. This suggests that the VROT may have captured more complex aspects of executive dysfunction than the neuropsychological measures. Along with the Modified Six Elements Test, the VROT significantly predicted DEX scores, contributing unique variance. These findings support the use of the VROT as a sensitive and ecologically valid measure of executive function. Further psychometric research of the VROT is required.