



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE  
**HEALTH**

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE  
COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORDERS

Exploring Associations Between the Patient-Provider Relationship  
and Adherence to Treatment in Acquired Communication Disorders

By  
Lindsay Reiner

A Capstone Project submitted to the  
Communication and Sciences Disorders program  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's degree

Advisor: Rebecca Hunting Pompon, Ph.D.

# Motivation

Empathy, supportive, & understanding → more motivated, attentive, follow through on assignments and recommendations

*Conversely*

Unsupported & misunderstood → less inclined to adhere to work, physically/mentally attend class and appointments



# INTRODUCTION

## **Patient adherence:**

*The follow-up of the patient to the agreed upon recommendations of their healthcare provider*

## **Adherence to treatment results in:**

- Improved quality of life
- Improved safety
- Better outcomes

# What is aphasia?

**Definition:** An acquired language impairment resulting from brain injury that impedes the ability to express and understand language

Presentations are variable

**Prevalence:** ~ 2 million people in the US

**Incidence:** ~180,000 new cases each year in the US

(National Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, 2015)

**Causes:** stroke, head trauma, brain tumors, other neurological origins

# Terminology & Factors

Adherence → ‘active engagement’

**Adherence:** active patient role; patient & provider collaborate in developing/implementing treatment plan

**vs.**

**Compliance:** passive patient role; patient obeys instructions of their provider with little input



Variables contributing to adherence

**Relationship  
variables**

Patient  
variables

Illness/  
symptom  
variables

Treatment  
variables

Organizational  
factors



# Significance

The way the clinical relationship  
– the alliance between patient and provider –  
is considered, approached, fostered, and developed  
may yield **more effective outcomes** for the patient

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## **Research Question:**

How does the patient-provider relationship influence patient adherence to treatment in the rehabilitation of acquired communication disorders?

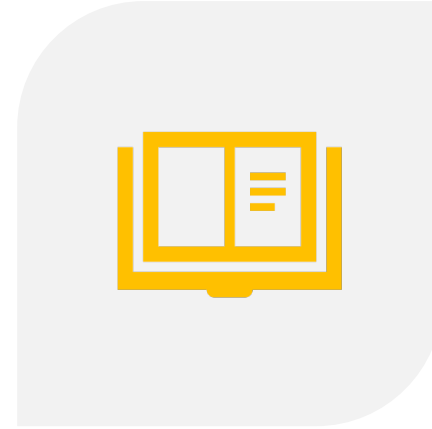
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Project Assigned: Critically Appraised Topic

# METHODS & RESULTS



4 ELECTRONIC DATABASES  
SEARCHED



27 ARTICLES & 1 BOOK  
INCLUDED

***No literature now exists specific to communication disorders.  
Search expanded to draw from several clinical disciplines***



# LITERATURE FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

## Qualities of Adherence

*Important determinants of the patient-provider relationship:*

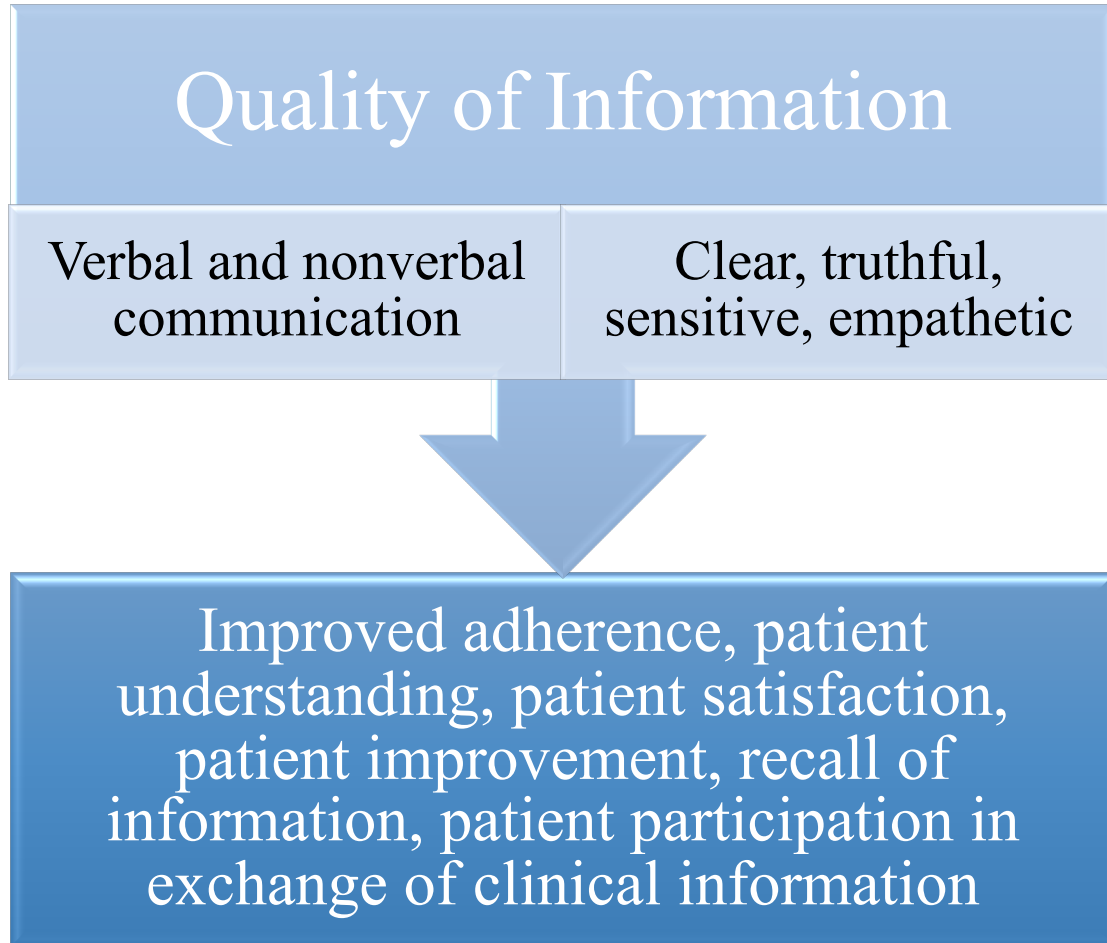
- 1) Effective communication
- 2) Empathy
- 3) Trust
- 4) Patient-self awareness

## Outcomes and Adherence

*Outcomes relate to:*

- 1) Impairment level improvement
- 2) Patient adjustment
- 3) Perceived effectiveness of treatment
- 4) Patient satisfaction

# Communication



# Empathy

Ability to understand and share feelings of others

Comprehend patient's  
circumstance, feelings and  
perspectives

Communicate that  
understanding/verify accuracy

Act on that understanding in a  
meaningful way



Improved clinical competence, outcomes, patient  
satisfaction and adherence, and decrease of anxiety and  
distress

# Trust

**Fiduciary relationships:** patients place complete trust, confidence, and reliance in their providers to act for the patients' benefit

Responsible for influencing patient behaviors

Develops through ongoing, thoughtful, and mutual communication over time



Greater self-efficacy, expectations, motivation, adherence and outcomes

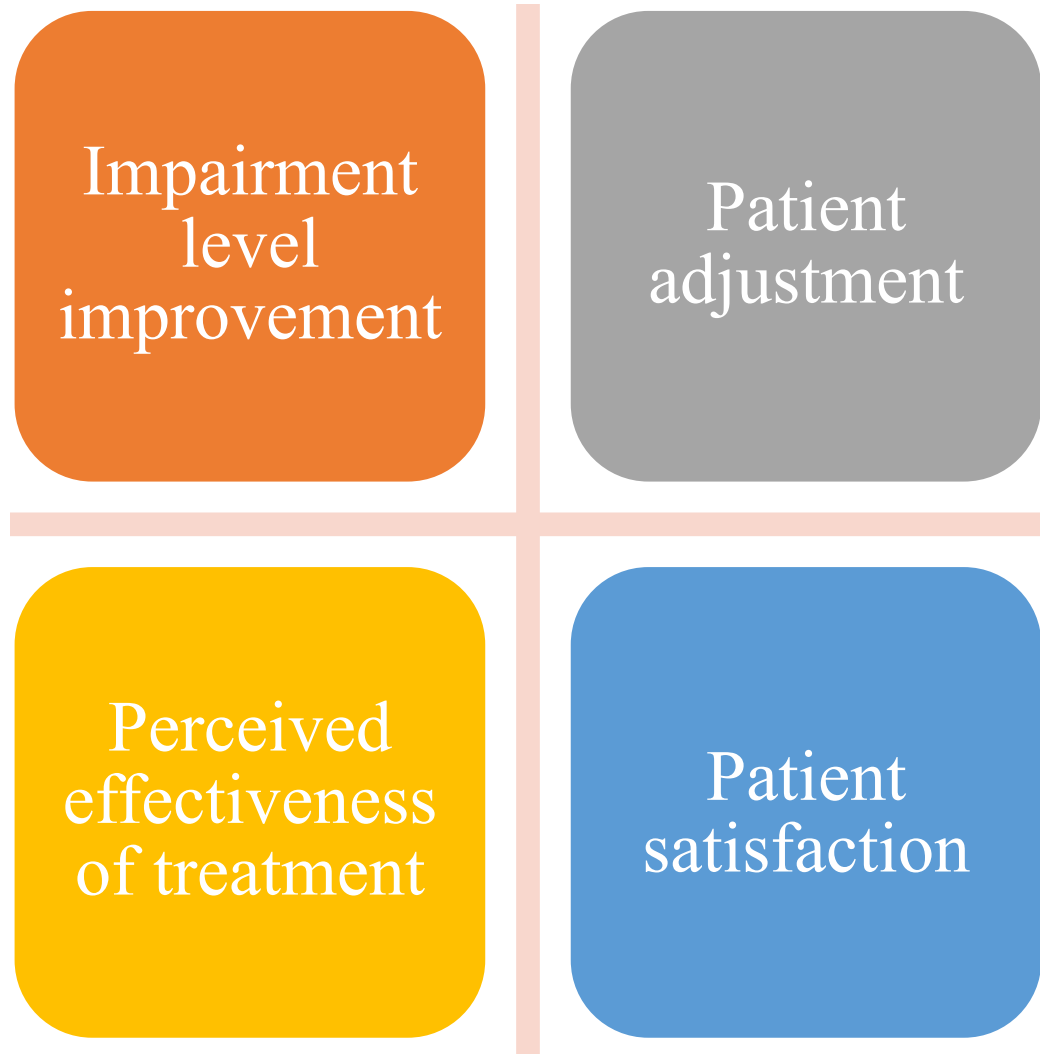
# Patient self-awareness

An understanding of one's own emotional, cognitive and physiological experience, as well as an understanding of how they come across to others



Better adherence, better alliance

# Outcomes and Adherence



# SUMMARY

The relationship between the patient and provider can influence adherence to treatment in several healthcare disciplines, and presumably with patients who have acquired communication disorders

- Relationship influences adherence
- Patients benefit from better patient-provider relationship

The background of the slide features several thin, curved lines in a light gray color, some solid and some dashed, creating a sense of movement and depth. On the left side, there is a blue rectangular area with a white border and a small white triangle pointing downwards at the bottom center. Inside this blue area, the words "FUTURE DIRECTIONS" are written in a white, serif, all-caps font.

# FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Exploring the alliance and treatment adherence within the speech-language domain
- Training for clinicians
  - interpersonal skills
  - relational strategies
  - motivational enhancement techniques
  - strategies to support collaborative goal setting
- Exploring how cultural sensitivity impacts the alliance within speech-language domain
- Focusing on *how* therapy is constructed



# Clinician Directives to Improve Treatment Adherence

Foster	Foster a positive relationship with your clients
Build	Build interpersonal skills that promote trust and empathy
Adapt	Adapt communication style to be in sync with your clients
Be Clear	Be clear, honest, sensitive, and receptive
Engage	Engage in genuine, less formal conversation
Allow	Allow time for the relationship to develop
Treat	Treat clients as experts in their own experience Value clients' thoughts, feelings, knowledge and insight
Provide	Provide clients with ample opportunity to express themselves
Be Mindful	Be mindful – clients who are more self-aware may be more adherent to treatment. Less self-awareness → more support

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