Objectives

Define aphasia and explain the three main types of aphasia

Describe and discuss alternative communication techniques

Will know how to utilize available resources to aid in effective communication with aphasic children

Understand how environment and body language affects communicating with aphasic children
Camp Nursing Role

• Fourteen million children attend camp every year
• Camp nurses deal with a wide spectrum of health concerns
  • Acute illness/injury
  • Manage communicable diseases
  • Chronic illness/disability
  • Medical emergency
• Camp nurses often do not have a pediatric background
• Camp nurses may care for children with aphasia due to multiple etiologies at both special needs and traditional camps
Why Is This Important?

• Communicating with a sick or injured child can be difficult in normal situations
  • Without the right tools, communicating with an aphasic child can add to the frustration
  • Can be frightening to the child
• Camp nurses do not have the traditional support systems
  • May not have specialized training in alternative communication techniques
• Resources need to be straightforward and readily accessible
What is Aphasia

• Speech and language are not the same thing
  • Language is a coding system used for reasoning and understanding
  • Speech is a combination of sounds to convey meaning

• Aphasia is an impairment of language
  • Injury to the left hemisphere of the brain
  • Broca’s area
  • Wernicke’s area

• Wide spectrum of impairment from mild to severe
  • It is important to determine the level of receptiveness

• Causes of aphasia include autism, cerebral palsy, stroke, and traumatic brain injury
Types of Aphasia

• Aphasia is often broadly defined as either expressive (Wernicke’s) or receptive (Broca’s)
  • Broca’s aphasia: may be able to speak a very limited vocabulary of short phrases
    • Typically, reading is not affected
  • Wernicke’s aphasia: can produce speech but may say irrelevant words or speak out of order
    • Reading and writing is often severely impaired

• Global aphasia: unable to speak or understand language
  • Reading and writing is often severely impaired
Similar Terms

• Aphasia and dysphasia are often used synonymously
  • In America, the preferred term is aphasia

• Dysphagia and dysphasia sound alike but are actually quite different
  • Dysphagia: a muscular problem of the esophagus that results in difficulty swallowing

• Dysarthria: weakness or paralysis of the jaw muscles that result in slurred speech

• Apraxia: neurological disorder that impairs motor skills, inhibiting voluntary movement
  • Pediatric diagnosis is referred to as childhood apraxia of speech (CAS)
Living With Aphasia

• We all use speech to communicate their needs, desires, complaints
  • The inability to verbally communicate can cause frustration, anger, and social exclusion

• Communicating with aphasic children is not easy, but possible
  • Much of communication is nonverbal

• Children may have expressive and/or receptive language challenges

• Watch this amusing YouTube video and imagine living with aphasia https://youtu.be/8rX7fkDLEx0
Language Challenges

Receptive Language Disorders

• Child may:
  • Have difficulty following directions
  • Problems recognizing the difference between sounds
  • Be socially awkward
  • Have behavioral problems
  • Be easily distracted
  • Appear forgetful

Expressive Language Disorders

• Child may:
  • Have problems forming sentences
  • Speak in short, simple sentences
  • Get words mixed up
  • Have trouble finding the right words
  • Appear shy, doesn’t participate
Tips for Aphasic Communication

• Get the attention of the child before speaking
• Keep eye contact and watch the body language and gestures they use
• Remove distractions
• Keep tone at a normal level and slow down
• Keep it simple
• When possible, ask “yes” and “no” questions
• Give the child time to respond and let them express themselves
Alternative Communication

• Alternative communication is any type of communication used in place of talking
  • Gestures, facial expression, stance, writing, drawing, sign language
  • Communication boards allow the child to point at pictures, letters, words, and symbols
    • Represent objects, actions, feeling, etc.

• Communication boards are a tool that the aphasic child may touch or electronic that will speak for the child
  • Communication boards are a great way for a nurse to communicate and understand the basic needs of the aphasic child

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
Picture Exchange Communication System

- PECS is a communication system that uses tags to make sentences
  - Originally developed as a communication device to use with preschool age children with autism
- Can be used to express wants and needs
- Tags can be used for tasks, activities, or events
- The child is taught to communicate through a six-step process
  1. How to communicate
  2. Distance and persistence
  3. Picture discrimination
  4. Sentence structure
  5. Responsive requesting
  6. Commenting
• Tags are very useful in a multitude of settings
  • Most aphasic children can recognize pictures
  • Personal relevance is best so when possible use a picture of the child’s belonging to make a tag
  • Velcro strips allow for easy placement and removal
    • If going to the lake, have the child remove the lake tag
    • If doing crafts, have the child remove the craft tag
  • If made into a book, the child carry with them
Communication Books

• Effective communication occurs when both the sender and receiver can code and decode the message in a way the other can understand

• Organizing “speech” into colors makes communication easier and more proficient

• Color coding is helpful
  • **Red**: nouns (person, place, or thing)  
    • Mary, camp, rope  
  • **Purple**: pronouns (personal/possessive)  
    • mine, he, you  
  • **Pink**: verbs (action words)  
    • open, run, skip  
  • **Blue**: adjectives and adverbs (descriptors)  
    • pretty, slow  
  • **Green**: prepositions (position words)  
    • in, on, up
Back Pocket Activities

• On a rainy day at camp or whenever there is extra time, make language into a game
  • Alphabet activity
    • Write out the alphabet in a column
      • Have child write and if possible, say a word that starts with that letter
  • Category activity
    • Write or say a word and have child go on a scavenger hunt to find 10 items in that category
      • Sample categories: food, clothing, things that are green
  • Song activity
    • Play or sing a song with repetitive chorus
      • Have child hum the song, then try singing it
Resources

• If camp will allow, children may come to camp with assistive technologies that are downloaded on an iPad, tablet or phone
  • Many do not require an internet connection
• Communication boards, books, and cards will help aphasic children express themselves
• Informational videos explain strategies to help communicate with those that have aphasia
• The National Aphasia Association also has many resources that are free to download and use
• Time is the best resource for effective communication
  • Aphasic children often need additional time and support to relay their message using a variety of helpful mediums
Aphasia Acronym

• Aphasia acronym (NAA website)
  A  ask simple, direct questions
  P  provide multiple communication options
  H  help communicate if asked
  A  acknowledge frustration
  S  speak slowly and clearly
  I  if you don’t understand, say so
  A  allow extra time
Communication Poster
This poster can be downloaded from the NAA website
https://www.aphasia.org
References


Appendices

- Picture Board for Camp Nursing
- Aphasia Poster - female
- Aphasia Poster - male
- Dysphasia Acronym
- Dysphasia Caregiver Guide