



# The USC Aphasia Lab Newsletter

Research and Community News for People with Aphasia, Their Families and the Rehabilitation Professionals Who Work with Them

## The Disease Detective Looks at Aphasia

WRITTEN BY KATIE BEMAN

Laura Valtorta is an attorney and filmmaker who lives locally in Columbia. She has created a series of films entitled *The Disease Detective*, in which she investigates mysterious illnesses. By creating these films she hopes to bring awareness to these conditions that the public may not know about. Laura reached out to the Aphasia Lab hoping to spotlight aphasia in her next film. We were more than happy to have her. Back in July and August she came to the lab and conducted interviews with researchers, participants, caregivers, and students to be featured in the film.



James Jett, a participant, jumped at the opportunity to be featured in the film. Here is what he had to say about his experience.

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**What was your experience like being a part of the film?**

"It was a wonderful experience about what Aphasia meant for me and Stroke Brain Survivor. As an Ambassador, the film knows it is an opportunity process and each person has their strengths and weaknesses story."

**What do you hope people learn from watching this film?**

"Hope people learn more about Aphasia and learning more for helping people who and can't do stuff that used to be. It is New Life Long Journey to see the new film."

We will be having a screening of the film, The Disease Detective Looks At Aphasia, on January 11th at 6:30pm in USC's Russell House Theater. The film will also be available for viewing on Amazon and Tubi.

Click this link or scan the QR code to see a behind the scenes look at the documentary filming!  
<https://tinyurl.com/Aphasia-movie-filming>



\*To view the video, scan and click  
"Or continue to dropbox.com"



## #Hide & Speak Up For Aphasia

WRITTEN BY SARA SAYERS & LAUREN HAMMOND

We started our #Hide & Speak Up for Aphasia Facebook group over the summer with a collective purpose to inspire everyone to get involved and embrace the cause of aphasia awareness.

It all begins with a simple walk, discovering a rock, and transforming it into a powerful work of art before carefully concealing it for others to find. In our roles as painters and hiders, we aspire to ignite a passion within our finders to join our ranks, becoming advocates for aphasia awareness themselves.

Together, we can sow the seeds of happiness and enlightenment, making the world a brighter place for those affected by aphasia, one painted rock at a time. Let our random acts of kindness spread far and wide, igniting conversations and understanding, bringing hope and support to those facing the challenges of aphasia.



## Paint a rock, Find a rock, Hide a rock and help us in the spread of aphasia awareness!



Many members of our lab community came out to our rock painting event. What a fun time together!

Spreading Aphasia awareness in...

Cumming, GA

Athens, GA

Columbia, SC... [See more](#)

Our friends at MUSC's aphasia support group in Charleston, SC also got together to paint rocks for aphasia awareness!



#aphasiarocks  
Charleston Aphasia Connection



We can all work together to spread awareness for aphasia! We would love for you to join in, get creative and paint a rock. Be sure to write #Hide & Speak Up for Aphasia OR cut the labels out below and tag the USC Aphasias Lab on Facebook and Instagram!



Post a picture on our Facebook group  
#Hide & Speak Up For Aphasia  
Re-locate our rock to spread  
**Aphasia Awareness!**

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# Prognostic Factors for Immediate and Long-Term Outcomes After Aphasia Therapy

WRITTEN BY SIGFUS KRISTINSSON, PH.D.

## Background

Based on both prior research and clinical experience, **we know that aphasia treatment works**. We also know that responsiveness to aphasia treatment varies substantially across individuals. However, we don't know as much about the factors that influence this variability. That is, how can we predict who will respond well to treatment? The answer to this question is critical to ensure that ALL individuals with aphasia can receive appropriate clinical care and treatment that maximizes their recovery.

### POLAR STUDY

(COMPLETED: 2021)

Predicting Outcomes for Language Rehabilitation

For the purpose of this study, **we focused on five factors that affect treatment outcomes**: (1) aphasia severity, (2) age, (3) education, (4) time from stroke, and (5) nonverbal cognition.

## Study Design



**107 individuals with aphasia**

Left hemisphere stroke

At least 12 months post stroke



**Case History**



**Speech & Language Testing**



**MRI scan**

**6 WEEKS**

**treatment with SLP**

(3 weeks of phonological tx & 3 weeks of semantic tx)

\*random order as to which they received 1st

## Results

Focusing on the five factors, we found that aphasia severity emerged as the strongest predictor of treated recovery across all time points. Participants were grouped based on their performance on the Western Aphasia Battery, a clinical measure of aphasia severity. Participants with very severe aphasia improved their naming by 0.2-0.3 words, those with severe aphasia improved by 1-3 words, whereas participants with moderate aphasia improved by 10-12 words, and those with mild aphasia improved by 6-9 words.

Younger age was associated with better treatment outcomes and better maintenance of treated recovery up to 6 months after treatment. Time from stroke was associated with long-term maintenance of treatment gains, with recent stroke survivors showing relatively better maintenance than participants who were far removed from their strokes.

## **What does this mean?**

These findings suggest that treatment-induced language recovery is predictable based on several easily measurable prognostic factors (aphasia severity, age, and time from stroke).

In other words, our results help us to understand why some people with aphasia may improve more in treatment than others, even though they receive identical treatment. Broadly speaking, this means that treatment outcomes can be improved with the personalization of language assessments and treatment procedures.

It is our sincere hope that this study will inform the development of personalized treatment protocols in aphasia research and positively impact clinical management of aphasia. We certainly plan to elaborate on these findings in future research, as much work is still needed to ensure maximal recovery for all people suffering from aphasia.

**Link to publication:** <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10205105/>



**About the Author:** Sigfus Kristinsson is a Research Assistant Professor in the Aphasia Lab. This paper, titled “Predicting Outcomes of Language Rehabilitation: Prognostic Factors for Immediate and Long-Term Outcomes After Aphasia Therapy,” was recently published in the Journal of Speech Language and Hearing Research in March 2023.



## **Reflections: Mark's Art Journey**

WRITTEN BY MARY AITCHISON &  
SUSAN ANDREWS  
PAINTINGS BY MARK ANDREWS

<https://tinyurl.com/MA-Virtual-Art-Gallery>

**Click the link to view more wonderful paintings by Mark!**



During our time together, I learned that art was an important part of Mark's daily life and stroke and aphasia recovery. I adored learning from Mark about his creations and his wife Susan believes his oil paintings are a major mode of communication. She has noticed that his oil paintings are one of the best ways he can share himself with adults, especially one on one. He gets positive feedback that really helps his confidence; and while he is still improving his communication skills, art supports his ability to have meaningful engagement with others. While he finds inspiration all around, and creates in his home studio, he enjoys studio art classes as it brings him into contact with new folks on a regular basis, and since they are passionate about the same thing – there is much to communicate! Susan says, painting is such perfect therapy for him, his favorite "go to" activity.

# Sharing My Stroke Journey

WRITTEN BY HEATHER CENTELLA

Hi my name heather Centella and 11/22/22 I am stroke hemorrhagic and global aphasia

Last week my daughter, and said "hey mom why did you not normal" ? Harper 7yrs and busting me crying.

I'm 39ys old, a job 7y ortho primsa practice training and 3 weeks new job office management law office. Andrew (husband) army 22 years and kids 16y and 7y. Everything great! Now it's gone.

On 11/22/22 I working and Andrew home. Something Wrong. my phone right hand control was not working, and again phone right hand and my face was numb. I knew it a stroke. I Andrew my office (5 min), ambulance (5min) but hospital (30/40min) country.

11/26/22 icu 🤔😓

12/22/22 Inpatient therapy 😊 midlands

1/19/23 home sweet home 😊😓😓😓😓😓

3/15/23 MRI 🏠 25% bleeding with stroke 😊

3/22/23 outpatient therapy

3/24/23 yard I walked down and harp in 1st front tooth 🦷😓

4/15/23 i am wheelchair fall chair 🛋️

4/26/23 assists 30 steps walked 😊😓

5/1/23 drives golf cart myself ✓

5/7/23 Walmart ride myself ✓

5/9/23 ankle/foot brace all by myself ✓

5/20/23 back and forth with back deck ✓

5/26/23 30 minutes bike, 1 minutes epically ✓

7/9/23 I have swimming 🏊

8/1/23 - 8/4/23 30hrs seizures and hospital

8/4/23 -8/12/23 global aphasia, nervous, 20-30min panic attacks and Short memory loss

8/11/23 aphasia USC lab studies 2 ✓😓😓

8/12/23 Good 🍑 and no panic attack ✕

8/17/23 participate in USC's clinical treatment study, Speech Entrainment for Aphasia Recovery (SpARc)

9/6/23 I "running" 😓😓 10 steps walking no cane

10/13/23 Ive did it. Today by myself showered. No Andrew work, no kids school and no caregiver

10/18/23 walking down driveway and down street and porch 30min

11/2/23 my elbow and hand moved

Heather shared with us how she has documented her stroke journey thus far through texting notes in her phone. Here is just a sample of her notes along the way.

What a great tip to use your phone to journal. There are options to use text, voice recognition, and emojis!

We are so fortunate to be a part of your journey.

Thank you for being brave and sharing with us! ❤️

Marisa



Emma



## Welcome New Lab Members!

Laura



Veronica



Marisa, Emma, Laura, and Veronica are all graduate students in the Speech-Language Pathology program at USC. They joined our amazing team of GA's in the Aphasia Lab this fall. Our GA's play an instrumental role in scoring our assessments for our research studies, helping with our community events, newsletter, and social media accounts.

**We are so happy to have them as a part of our team!**



USC has started a **local chapter of the Synapse organization** and wanted to share information with our community! They are an organization dedicated to supporting the brain injury community by connecting people with brain injuries to create a supportive network, in addition to increasing awareness and education about brain injuries.

### **Peer Support Program & Buddy Program**

Peer Support Program aims to create a safe and welcoming space for individuals with brain injuries to share their experiences, challenges, and triumphs at biweekly sessions. For the Buddy Program, members will be partnered with individuals in the community who are living with brain injuries. The program is designed to provide meaningful connections, reduce isolation, and offer practical assistance to those in need.

### **Contact Information:**

**Local SC Chapter email:** [scsynapse@gmail.com](mailto:scsynapse@gmail.com)

**Synapse National Website:** <https://synapsenational.wixsite.com/synapse>

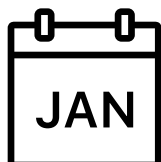


## The USC Aphasia Lab

Communication Sciences and Disorders

Arnold School of Public Health

Columbia, SC 29208



Movie screening for the Disease Detective Looks at Aphasia will be held at USC's Russell House Theater on **Thursday, January 11th at 6:30pm**. More details to come!



Aphasia Lab Prom! The Speech Language Pathology & Audiology Interest Group (SLPAIG) on USC's campus will be hosting this special event on **Wednesday, February 7th from 6-9pm** at the Capstone Ballroom. Be on the look out for more information in the new year!



**Aphasia Community Event (ACE) EVENT** will be held in the Spring '24 with more details to come. **Check out our promo video with footage taken from our ACE Event this year!**

WATCH NOW



<https://tinyurl.com/ACE-2024>

Follow  
-US-

Make sure you are following us on all of our social media platforms to stay up to date with everything that is going on in the Aphasia Lab!



Instagram  
[@uofscaphasialab](https://www.instagram.com/uofscaphasialab)



<https://tinyurl.com/Aphasia-Lab-YouTube>



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