Education for Patient and Family

What is **aphasia**?

- Aphasia is a *language problem*
  - Difficulty with *speaking*
  - Difficulty with *understanding*
  - Difficulty with *reading*
  - Difficulty with *writing*

- Aphasia affects *conversational interaction*

- Aphasia **does not** affect *intelligence*
Aphasia does not change you:

- You can still have opinions
- You can still socialize
- You can still make your own decisions

What causes aphasia?

- Brain injuries can cause aphasia
  - Stroke
  - Head injuries: Car accidents, falls, trauma
- Other neurological diseases can cause aphasia
  - Dementia
  - Brain tumors
How common is aphasia?

- About 1 million people in the U.S. have aphasia
- 1 in 250 people has aphasia

What other problems could you have?

1. Dysarthria:
   - Weakness in the speech muscles
   - Reduced speech quality
   - Reduced intelligibility

2. Dysphagia:
   - Swallowing difficulty
   - Chewing difficulty
3. Changes in **cognitive ability**:
   - Difficult to **concentrate** or pay attention
   - Cannot **remember** new information
   - Difficulty with **problem solving**

4. Apraxia:
   - Difficulty with carrying out **voluntary speech** or **body movements**

5. Perseveration:
   - **Inappropriate repetitions** of sounds, words, phrases or tasks
Where to find more information about aphasia?

- Triangle Aphasia Project (TAP)
  - Local support groups
  - (919) 484-7719
  - www.aphasiaproject.org

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)
  - www.asha.org

- National Aphasia Association (NAA)
  - www.aphasia.org
Communication Tips for Family and Caregivers

- Be a **partner** — not a therapist
- Set the stage for effective communication:
  - Good lighting
  - Relaxed atmosphere
- Speak at a normal rate, pauses appropriately
- Don’t use “baby talk”
- Write down key words to aid comprehension
- Provide choices
- Be willing to accept ANY form of communication:
  - Speech
  - Gestures
  - Writing
  - Drawing
  - Using a communication notebook
- Sit down and have a pleasant conversation with your partner for at least once a day

Adapted from:
- [http://www.aphasia.ca/home-page/about-aphasia/what-is-aphasia/](http://www.aphasia.ca/home-page/about-aphasia/what-is-aphasia/)