

ABSTRACTS

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Oral Presentations

Be Specific: Tapping Residual Conversation Skills in AD Using Prompts

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Objectives

To examine the impact of Alzheimer's disease on conversation and **communication** abilities.

Methods

21 people with probable Alzheimer's Disease (pAD) were shown photographs of six different annual events. Each event was depicted by images of 'food', 'scenes' or 'people' and presented in both black and white and colour formats. The participants' level of cognitive impairment was divided into 'mild', 'moderate' and 'severe', based on their Mini Mental State Examination score. Participants were invited to discuss their memories of each event with the alternate use of 'specific' and 'general' prompts.

Results

All six events in both black and white and colour and all image types were equally successful at eliciting recollections and exchanges. In terms of response types, more general memories and positive comments were produced when 'specific' prompts were used as opposed to when general prompts were supplied. Childhood memories were shown to be the most emotionally significant and negative memories were more specific than positive ones. The 'moderate' group produced significantly more general memories, specific memories and total output than the 'severe' group and significantly less than the 'mild' group. Moreover, the 'moderate' group employed conversational tactics as an

attempt to mask their memory difficulties. These were less prevalent in the 'mild' and 'severe' groups.

Conclusions

These findings suggest that even in the later stages of AD, people can interact meaningfully when prompted specifically. Furthermore, output in the 'moderate' stage is characterised by 'cover-up' strategies, indicating both an awareness of conversational limitations and a desire to conceal them.