

New research reclaims the power of speech

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A UQ researcher has revealed a new treatment for a speech disorder that commonly affects those who have suffered a stroke or brain injury.

PhD graduate Dr Rachel Wenke has shown in a recent study that the Lee Silverman Voice Treatment® may be an effective option for dysarthria patients suffering from [stroke](#) and [traumatic brain injury](#) (TBI).

Dysarthria is a speech disorder which negatively affects a person's ability to communicate as they can be difficult to understand and may sound like they have slurred or unclear speech.

The disorder affects 75% of individuals with Parkinson's disease, up to 30% of those who have experienced a stroke and about 60% of individuals with TBI.

The program was originally designed to assist Parkinson's patients, and Dr Wenke is the first to trial the method's effectiveness in a group study involving other neurological conditions.

"This research will also help to provide speech pathologists evidence for treatments for the disorder, which may also encourage further research in the area," she said.

In the study, the effectiveness of the treatment was compared with traditional dysarthria therapy for 26 participants ranging from 18 to 88 years who had experienced stroke and TBI.

The findings revealed that participants who received the treatment demonstrated positive effects of a louder and clearer voice and slower rate of speech.

Many participants also reported increased confidence in their ability to communicate which significantly improved their quality of life and well-being.

"For instance, after receiving the treatment, one participant reported that the quality of his relationship with his wife had actually improved because his wife could now understand him, whereas before treatment, they would hardly communicate," Dr Wenke said.

"My findings have also shown that people who lived with dysarthria for up to 21 years were able to make improvements following treatment, therefore the mindset of not treating patients who have not improved in one or two years should be challenged."

The LSVT® program is an intensive therapy administered one hour a day, four days a week for 4 weeks. The patients are trained to use loud speech in progressively more difficult [speech](#) tasks.

Dr Wenke's research will be published in [Brain Injury](#) and the International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders.

Provided by University of Queensland ([news](#) : [web](#))

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