

Technological innovations, stakeholder collaboration in research can enhance daily lives of people living with aphasia

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Innovative technological solutions can enhance the daily lives of individuals living with aphasia, especially when people living with

communication disabilities, speech and language therapy clinicians, and academics collaborate at all stages of the research process. A [special issue](#) of *Advances in Communication and Swallowing* brings together research relevant to the use of technology in the assessment and treatment of aphasia, as well as social interactions including peer support, and practical applications that can influence future research and clinical practice.

While advances in technology aim to facilitate digital autonomy and offer more efficient access to health and social information, the [digital divide](#) experienced by people with [communication](#) impairment, such as [aphasia](#), compared to the general population, is still an issue.

"The exciting development of technology continues to facilitate more efficient and independent lives for those who use it. However, without hearing the voices of people with communication impairment, such as aphasia, future innovative technology will exclude these people, and rather than create a level playing field, will only serve to increase their currently experienced inequitable digital divide. This can easily be addressed by collaborating with people with communication impairment in a meaningful way at all stages of the research process," notes Helen Kelly, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, School of Clinical Therapies, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland, and co-Guest Editor of this special issue.

At the height of the global coronavirus pandemic, much of the management of aphasia and opportunities for supported social conversations for people with aphasia were undertaken using telehealth. The response to this unique situation in history resulted in exponential technological growth and innovation. Reflecting some of these innovations and developments, the range of topics presented in this special issue showcase innovative approaches to aphasia research, assessment, intervention, and participation.

Shauna Bell, BSc, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, School of Clinical Therapies, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland, and co-Guest Editor of the special issue, explains, "The digital divide, characterized by unequal access to technology, and the rapid evolution of digital technologies pose significant challenges for individuals with communication difficulties. Ensuring that these individuals are not left behind calls for a focused approach through applied research, as emphasized in this special issue, to develop innovative solutions and strategies that bridge this gap."

The essential component of listening to the voices of people with aphasia is threaded throughout the research presented in the issue, either through participant feedback, exploration of participant opinions regarding a service, or active involvement in co-design. The potential of digital technologies can be utilized to enhance the clinical management of aphasia and bring people living with aphasia from diverse geographical locations together for peer and social support.

Áine Kearns, Ph.D., Associate Professor B, School of Allied Health, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland, and co-Guest Editor of this special issue, concludes, "We hope that people living with aphasia will be recognized as key stakeholders in the development of accessible technology and included in research as experts. This involvement is crucial to narrowing the digital divide they often face, ensuring it keeps pace with the rapid advancements in [technology](#)."

More information: Helen Kelly et al, Innovative use of technology in aphasia, *Advances in Communication and Swallowing* (2024). [DOI: 10.3233/ACS-249000](https://doi.org/10.3233/ACS-249000)

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