The Aphasia Gavel Club: Empowering People with Aphasia

Auckland, November 2015

Roger Brown: Gavel Club Member
Ruth Farrell: Gavel Club Member
Jenni Webb: Gavel Club Member

Celia Moore: The University of Auckland
Dr. Clare McCann: The University of Auckland
Suzanne Purdy: The University of Auckland
Kevin Gladney: MSLTPrac The University of Auckland
Catherine Hulst: MSLTPrac The University of Auckland
Patricia De Guzman: Research Assistant
Jessica Lauer: Volunteer research assistant
“I am not what happened to me; I am what I choose to become.”

Carl Jung (1875-1961)
“I’ve gone from ‘I’ll see’ to ‘I can’ ”

Ruth
“If it wasn’t for the Gavel Club, I don’t know where I’d be today...”

Ruth
“You saw me before (18 months ago), and now I am totally different”

Richard
Fellowship
Self-confidence
“I would not dream of not going to the Gavel Club”

Ian
“When you get aphasia, you lose friends because they find it too hard to talk to you. I love coming to the Gavel Club because of the new friends”

Gavel Club members
“We are bonded by our aphasia, and understand each other’s silent disorder”

Roger
“Even if you do fall flat, there are 28 supporting hands to lift you back”

Ruth
Tell me and I forget. Teach me, and I may remember. Involve me and I learn.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)
“Mentorship shows new members how to feel the fear and do it anyway.”

Ruth
“When he cried for his very first speech, it really touched my heart and I wanted to come back and help”

Jenni
“He aha te mea nui o te ao?
He tangata! He tangata! He tangata!”

(What is the most important thing in the world?
It is people! It is people! It is people!)

Maori proverb
“I love Roger’s ‘noisy leadership’ ”

Jenni
Roles to fit individuals and skills
Intensity is important:
“You have keep on staying in the pool – even if might become a little be uncomfortable ”

Roger
“Gavel Club helps to organise my brain, that’s why I went for presidency, to help to increase my organisation”

Tony
“Don’t be afraid of us, just talk to us”

Tony to Lizzie, student
“Roger, what is like to have aphasia?”

“After a really long lunch, with good wine, you have a foggy head. But, the next morning, you wake up with a clear head. The difference is that if you have aphasia you wake up with the same foggy head – and it doesn’t improve!”
“We had 14 teachers and examples of the different manifestations of aphasia, this has helped us build the foundation of our knowledge bank for future learning. The members taught us that aphasia affects everyone differently and so it is important to really get to know and understand each individual with aphasia.”

Martin and Lizzie (students)
“What makes the gavel club so special...(is that)... it is a safe environment full of encouragement and support, where anything goes.
Getting to know each member in the relaxed environment of gavel club was a gift.”

Martin and Lizzie
“Fridays are my favourite day of the week, because that’s ‘Gavel Club Day’”

Catherine (Student)

“It’s a great place to learn here because you are not learning out of a book, you are learning from the people”

Kevin (Student)
The Gavel Club helps us to feel “empowered and confident in themselves and their role in life”
Take Home Message

The Gavel Club is an enriching group that has many benefits:

- Increases friendships when other friendships shrink down
- Different from individual therapy or other groups: combines elements of building confidence, fellowship, mentorship and leadership opportunities
- Cost effective: 14 times the contact hours more than the SLT/volunteer
- Safe place to have aphasia
- Rich learning environment for everyone:
  - people with aphasia
  - students
  - volunteers
  - speech language therapists

and moreover

_The whole is greater than the sum of its parts._
“We are happy to help with the research, because we know it will make it easier to help other people”

Jenni
Some of the research

- Measured communication confidence
- Asked members why they come
- Studied language efficiency
- Comparison of monologue & dialogue
Communication Confidence Rating Scale for Aphasia ($N=10$)

Wilcoxon signed-rank test

$2014 > 2013 \quad Z=2.19, \quad p=.028$

$2015 > 2013 \quad Z=2.09, \quad p=.037$
Why do you come?

• Focus groups to ask about members’ perceptions of the Gavel Club
  – I can make longer words now and before I didn’t at all, very short, very short answers
  – Everyone’s knows how difficult it is to speak
  – Everybody is the same
  – This is the one place we can organise it for us
Our Supporters:

- THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
- CENTRE FOR BRAIN RESEARCH
- AM Toastmasters, Club #4594, District 72.
  The First Breakfast Club in Australasia.
- The Tavistock Trust for Aphasia
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- Philippa Friary, The University of Auckland
- The Volunteer Team:
  - with respect, too many to name