
A Person-Centered Approach to Memory Care

by: Kelley Henry, MS CCC-SLP, Speech Language Pathologist at Villa Clara in Decatur, IL



Recently, we connected with **Kelley Henry**, a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) at [Villa Clara Rehab & Post-Acute Care](#) in Decatur, IL. What follows are a few of her insights regarding a person-centered approach for patients with memory deficits.

Q: How long have you been with ATS?

A: I joined ATS 3 years ago as a Speech-Language Pathologist. In my role, I provide a customized treatment plan for patients with a variety of diagnoses that may affect speech and language, voice cognition or dysphasia.

Q: As a Speech-Language Pathologist, how do you support patients with Alzheimer’s Disease, dementia, or other memory deficits?

A: I work alongside the therapy and clinical team members to provide a comprehensive assessment and treatment plan to support cognitive-communication functioning and swallowing disorders that may be associated with memory disorders. It is important to work with the patient and family/caregivers to determine short-term and long-term goals in order to support positive clinical outcomes.

Q: What should clinicians consider when addressing the needs of patients who have Alzheimer’s Disease, dementia or other memory impairments?

A: It is important to be aware of a patient’s needs in order to provide the best care possible. A person-centered approach is vital when developing communication approaches and overall care goals. If there is a significant memory deficit, using simple and clear instruction, visuals and writing short phrases is a helpful way to communicate and encourage conversation.

Q: What advice do you have for other clinicians as they care for residents with specific memory care needs?

A: Provide meaningful and engaging activities that are customized to the specific patient’s cognition level. Connecting with family members/caregivers to learn about the patient’s interests and other key information will help support the patient’s wellbeing. When providing care, consider the following:

- Provide treatments and care in a one-on-one situation to provide the best accommodations for the patient, like a quiet space.
- Approach the patient from the front in order to keep eye contact and use gestures and facial expressions to aid your conversation.
- Communicate at eye level, speaking slowly, providing frequent pauses to give the patient time to process and respond to the questions being asked.

Leadership Recommendations

- Care teams need to understand the needs and particular situations of each patient in order to provide the best care and support the wellbeing of each individual.
- Empathy and patience are two key skills that focus on the needs of each individual and create better care environments.
- Continue to provide structured activities in creative and safe ways in order to support the patient’s independence.
- Support the IDT with the resources, tools and training needed to foster a collaborative environment and staff competency.

Patient Stories

About Lois

“Lois” was admitted to Villa Clara with a post-hospitalization stay for COVID-19 treatment and coexisting conditions including memory deficits and expressive aphasia.

To support her overall physical recovery with the goal of returning home, the plan of care included:

- Collaboration with the interdisciplinary team to develop a comprehensive plan of care to address both physical and cognitive needs.
- A multi-disciplinary plan of care was initiated, including support from medical, restorative nursing, dietary and occupational therapy, speech-language therapy and physical therapy.
- The use of memory techniques and spaced retrieval tasks to retain information and support recall (e.g., using photos and repetition, word-finding activities, and reasoning tasks).
- Tasks were completed through gestural cues and repetition.

Over the course of her recovery, Lois’s cognitive skills greatly increased. Thanks to the care and therapies provided by the team at Villa Clara and ATS, she was able to return home.

Industry Updates

June is [Aphasia Awareness Month](#), observed annually to share information regarding this common condition.

Aphasia is an acquired communication disorder that impairs a person’s ability to process language but does not affect intelligence. Patients can have varying degrees of impairment in four primary areas, including spoken language expression, spoken language comprehension, written expression and reading comprehension.



Did You Know:

- More people have aphasia than have many other common conditions, including cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease or muscular dystrophy.
- Aphasia can result from a traumatic brain injury, brain tumor or other neurological causes.
- The most common cause of aphasia is stroke (about 25-40% of stroke survivors acquire aphasia).
- There are at least 2,000,000 people with aphasia in the US

(source: National Aphasia Association)

Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) play a central role in the screening, assessment, diagnosis and treatment of persons with aphasia. There are two general categories of therapies that support patients impacted by aphasia:

- **Impairment-based therapies** are aimed to improve language functions and consist of procedures in which the clinician directly stimulates specific listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.
- **Communication-based** (also called consequence-based) therapies are intended to enhance communication by any means and encourage support from caregivers. These therapies often consist of more natural interactions involving real-life communicative challenges.

Because there is a variety of aphasias, it is imperative that providers understand the different types of aphasia in order to better determine the appropriate plan of care to meet the patient’s specific needs. When implementing the plan of care, use simple and creative techniques, including a communication board, pictures, sign language, etc., to support positive communication and treatment outcomes.

[Contact us](#) to discuss how ATS’ therapists can support your patients with aphasia.

Additional tools and resources:

- [Classification of Aphasia \[PDF\]](#)
- [Multidisciplinary Evidence to Treat Bilingual Individuals With Aphasia](#)
- [Person-Centered Focus on Function: Aphasia \[PDF\]](#)

Celebrating Career Nursing Assistants

[National Career Nursing Assistants Week](#) is June 17-24. This week recognizes nursing assistants who have dedicated their lives to the well-being of others.

On behalf of the entire ATS team, thank you for all you do in providing person-centered care.



ATS offers services to patients no matter their location. We are currently serving patients throughout Illinois, specifically the Chicagoland area and in Central Illinois (Peoria, Springfield, Champaign).

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