Editorial: Connections: Client, Clinician Context

David Trembath

Menzies Health Institute Queensland, Griffith University

Correspondence to:

D.Trembath@Griffith.edu.au
This issue of JCPSLP showcases a selection of papers presented at the 2014 Speech Pathology Australia National Conference. The theme – Connections: Client, Clinician, Context – challenged delegates and speakers to draw on knowledge and experience from within, and across, all areas of speech-language pathology practice; to consider not just the parts, nor the whole, of what we do, but rather the connections that make the parts the whole. It is fitting, therefore, that this special issue contains papers reflecting a diverse range of populations, perspectives, questions, and practices. Together, these papers illustrate not only the importance of connecting clients, clinicians, and contexts in the pursuit of improved assessment and treatment science, but also the power of such an approach when applied to clinical practice.

The first three invited papers summarise the keynote presentations. Douglas (2014), who presented the distinguished Elizabeth Usher Memorial Lecture, presents a compelling account of the importance of ‘self’ to the development of respectful, effective, client-clinical partnerships. Drawing inspiration from her research involving individuals with acquired brain injury, she presents a model of ‘self’ that can guide collaborative therapy. Roulstone (2014) examines the connections between client perspectives, clinical expertise, and research evidence in a sophisticated account of the contemporary challenges to evidence-based practice. Langmore (2014) considers the evidence for rehabilitation exercises for individuals with dysphagia, demonstrating the importance of combining client perspectives and practice wisdom with the available research evidence when selecting, delivering, and evaluating interventions.

The need for a connected, evidence-based approach to research, policy, SLP training, and practice is further illustrated in the subsequent nine articles. McCormack and Verdon (2014) present the scale of the challenge to delivering services to clients in vulnerable and at risk communities, through a mapping exercise that connects data from the Australian Early
Development Census (AEDC) with the known location of practising speech pathologists in Australia. Purcell, Fulcher, Baker, and Munro (2014) note that challenges accessing SLP services are one of several factors clinicians identified as impacting on prognosis for children with hearing loss. Westerveld and Vidler (2014) highlight the importance of accurate assessment and interpretation of client needs in their study examining the use of the Renfrew Bus Story in the Australian context. Meanwhile, Eastwood, Madill, and McCabe (2014) focus on the importance of critically appraising the research evidence for treatments provided, in their systematic review of behavioural treatments for Muscle Tension Voice Disorder.

Two papers examined communication supports and outcomes for adults following stroke. In the first, Rose (2014) reports on a national survey of the practices and challenges to running community aphasia groups in Australia. She argues that the number of groups is insufficient given the size of the population of adults with aphasia, and that action is required to improve staff-training, funding, models of service, and promotion of the groups currently available. In the second paper, Sekhon, Rose, and Douglas (2014) examine the importance of addressing psychological well-being in persons with aphasia following stroke. They note that while SLPs recognise this important need, many indicate that they feel underprepared to address their clients’ needs. On a similar note, Nund et al (2014) highlight the potential impact of communication changes following chemoradiotherapy on the psychosocial well-being of adults with head and neck cancer, pointing to the need for a connect, holistic approach to client care.

Looking to the future, two papers examine clinical education. Ward et al (2014) report on the positive effects of Human Patient Simulation on SLP students’ knowledge, skills, and confidence in managing paediatric clients with dysphagia. Attrill, Lincoln, and McAllister (2014) examine the experiences of international SLP students who study and complete clinical
placements in Australia, highlighting the importance of being responsive to students’ individual needs. Together, the papers in this special issue present an insightful and encouraging portrayal of the connections between clients, clinicians, and contexts that already exist in SLP practice, as well as a set of challenges to be addressed through further research-practice innovations. It has been my pleasure as Guest Editor to present these achievements and new challenges.

References


