

How People with Parkinson's Disease Describe Speaking:
Implications for Treatment
K. Yorkston, C. Baylor, D. Britton

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to examine the experiences of people with Parkinson's Disease (PD). Specifically, how do they describe speaking and speech treatment?

Methods: 24 participants with PD took part in qualitative interviews related to speaking and speech treatment. Interviews were coded and themes developed.

Results: Participants described the process of speaking as involving: thinking about speaking, feelings, managing others, the environment and other influences of PD. Reasons for declining treatment include: logistical barriers, personal preferences, and delaying treatment until later. Although many report positive experiences with speech treatment (e.g. caring therapists, and increased awareness), treatment was described as requiring considerable effort and involving repetitious exercises.

Implications: From the perspective of people with PD, speaking is a process requiring both physical and cognitive effort. Suggestions for improvement include increased focus on the cognitive demands of speaking and on the psychosocial aspects of communication.