

## **Session B: Raising Aphasia Awareness and the Perspectives of Individuals with Aphasia. How can we as SLPS, do better?**

Speakers: **Katilin Brooks** and **Avi Golden**

As SLPs, we are aware that aphasia is often misunderstood among various healthcare professionals (Strong & Randolph, 2021), emergency personnel and first responders (Ganzfried & Symbolik, 2011), as well as the general public (Simmons-Mackie et al., 2020). Lack of public awareness about aphasia can have negative impacts on persons with aphasia (PWA). These include, but may not be limited to psychosocial isolation, depression, and anxiety (REF) as well as lack of community resources and aphasia friendly facilities (REF). In this presentation, we will provide evidence supporting both the benefits of greater public understanding of aphasia, as well as documented methods in which SLPs can contribute and collaborate with PWA to increase aphasia awareness. Further, the lived experience and perspectives of PWA will be shared. Not all PWA have the verbal ability to advocate for change and improve awareness and accessibility themselves. However, embracing their perspectives and priorities helps us as SLPs work on behalf of our clients for improved accessibility, social interactions and social-emotional well-being.

### Learning Outcomes

- 1) Participants will describe the perceptions of individuals with aphasia related to the importance of aphasia awareness
- 2) Participants will list at least 3 ways they can improve their ability to spread aphasia awareness and become an aphasia advocate
- 3) Participants will discuss how they can collaborate with individuals with aphasia to spread awareness and understanding to the public and professionals.

Key words: Aphasia awareness, advocacy, client perspectives

### **Speaker Bios**

**Dr. Kaitlin Brooks** is an Assistant Professor and Clinical Supervisor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Molloy University. Dr. Brooks is a licensed and certified speech-language pathologist with 15 years' experience working with adults with speech, language, cognitive and swallowing disorders in various settings. Dr. Brooks has published and presented on topics related to communication and swallowing disorders related to stroke as well as the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to the rehabilitation process. Dr. Brooks is passionate about improving awareness of aphasia and other communication disorders and educating allied health professionals on ways to improve communication with individuals with a communication disorder, especially in emergency situations.

**Avi Golden** is a practicing EMT and former Critical Care and Flight Paramedic with North-Shore LIJ and NY Presbyterian EMS. Avi holds a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Biology and has extensive experience as a practicing paramedic both in the US and with Magen Adom David in Israel. After experiencing a stroke in 2007 and experiencing resulting aphasia, Avi now educates the medical and lay community and advocates for aphasia awareness.