Aphasia

Thank you for publishing "The ABCs of Aphasia" in the June/July 2011 issue. Due to epilepsy, I underwent surgical removal of portions of my left temporal lobe/amygdala/hippocampus in 2001 and lost access to most of my vocabulary. This was, of course, very disturbing; I was a former journalism major reduced to pointing and miming to communicate.

Fortunately, my intake was not damaged—only my output. I had no difficulty understanding language—spoken or written. I underwent speech therapy for a few months with moderate improvement.

Eventually I stumbled upon a "therapy": reading (to myself) out loud. I quickly regained much of my speech. I still have difficulty accessing names, and if I'm tired I'll have trouble with nouns, but I can usually make myself understood even under those circumstances.

Perhaps other readers can also use this as a complement to their current treatment(s) for aphasia. Even now I occasionally read my newspaper out loud as practice.

—Angela Woodward
Sacramento, CA

Coeli Carr's fine and hopeful article about aphasia does not mention that aphasias from neurodegenerative diseases like frontotemporal degeneration (FTD), also known as Pick's disease, are not susceptible of improvement, though sometimes medication and therapy can slow them down.

My recent memoir, *Strange Relation* (Paul Dry Books, 2011), recounts my husband's illness with FTD; one of the most striking symptoms early on was reduced speech and comprehension. He is now essentially mute.

The Web site of the Association for Frontotemporal Degeneration has changed; it is now **theaftd.org** (no longer **ftd-picks.org**).

—Rachel Hadas, Ph.D.
Newark, NJ

American Icon

As a 30-year-old woman with multiple sclerosis (MS), I suffer from severe neuropathic pain in my feet and legs. After reading your article on Jerry Mathers ("American Icon," June/July 2011), I was disappointed. The headline said that Mathers beat neuropathy, so for a condition that is very difficult to treat, I was expecting some major innovation. I congratulate Mr. Mathers on his decision to get healthy, but all he had to do was lose weight and his diabetic neuropathy went away. The other treatment options you listed were standard, run-of-the-mill options that anyone could find by Googling the condition.

—Meg Morgensen

THE EDITOR RESPONDS: Thank you for your letter, Meg. Please keep in mind that losing weight can be very difficult—in the case of Mr. Mathers, it required a complete transformation of his lifestyle and relationship to food. In the future, we will explore doing an article on other forms of neuropathy, such as caused by multiple sclerosis.

Your story on Jerry Mathers was fantastic. Just seeing his picture tugged at my heart strings.

Let's hope that Mathers' neuropathy stays beaten. And if he did it, maybe I can too.

—Liz Cole
Georgetown, IL

CORRECTION

In the cover story on Jerry Mathers (June/July 2011), we failed to mention that the neurologist who pushed Mathers to get a checkup—and discovered he had diabetes—was Meril Platzer, M.D., member of the American Academy of Neurology in private practice in California's San Fernando Valley. Our apologies to Dr. Platzer.

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