**pARTicipate: Art as Self-Expression for Persons with Aphasia**

*What do you get when you combine: 4 artists, 1 woodshop, 9 weeks, and a dash of salt?*

### Purpose:
- **pARTicipate** was a student-initiated, student-led art group.
- The aim was to explore art as self-expression in an aphasia-friendly setting.

### Background:
- Many people living with chronic aphasia (PWA) face barriers in accessing community-based leisure programs.
- Art groups using various media have been used as an intervention for acute stroke survivors and PWA.
- **pARTicipate** was the first art group offered specifically to PWA at the Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured.

### Methods:

- **Participants:**
  - 4 PWA in an outpatient program.
  - Participants were required to commit to attending all nine sessions.
- **Sessions:**
  - Nine weekly sessions, 1.5 hours each session.
  - Sessions 1-8: PWA completed 6 art projects.
  - Session 9: **Share Day.**
  - Participants completed a satisfaction survey after session 9.

### Share Day:
- Family, friends, and ARBI staff members were invited to **Share Day.**
- Participants showcased their projects and taught their skills to family and community members.

### Projects:

### Participant Feedback:
- Qualitative and quantitative data was gathered from satisfaction surveys.
- All participants indicated that they:
  - Enjoyed sharing their art with the community during **Share Day.**
  - Would join the group again if it was offered.
  - Are now comfortable, or very comfortable with art.
  - Two participants continued to make art independently.

### Conclusions:
- It is expected that skills learned may increase PWA confidence about participating in community-based art classes and foster a sense of belonging to the artistic community.
- Having learned to incorporate personal symbols, PWA can be deliberate in their use of art for self-expression in the future.
- **Share Day:**
  - PWA were empowered to assume a leadership role.
  - Teaching newly acquired artistic skills to family and community members, promoted positive feelings about the self, and revealed their competencies.

### Limitations:
- Surveys could be more comprehensive in order to gain more information about participant experience.

### Future Directions:
- Three of four participants are in long term care, therefore the **pARTicipate** curriculum could be shared with the staff at nursing homes.
- Participants were given the opportunity to practice teaching art in their regular aphasia conversation group in preparation for **Share Day.** Future art groups should incorporate a practice session.
- Evaluate the barriers in place for PWA to do art at home.

### References: