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Boston University School of Medicine

Department of Public Relations
Office of Media Relations

80 East Concord Street
Robinson 7 (B-7)
Boston, MA 02118-2393
(617) 638-8491
Fax: (617) 638-8044

NEWS

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Contact: Gina DiGravio
(617) 638-8491

MANUAL OF APHASIA THERAPY IS A 'BOOK OF HOPE' FOR APHASIAC PATIENTS, THEIR FAMILIES AND THEIR THERAPISTS.

Boston, Mass.----The Manual on Aphasia Therapy is a "book of hope" for people working with patients or loved ones afflicted with aphasia, according to Boston University's Nancy Helm-Estabrooks, Sc.D, co-author of the book and a prominent expert in the field of aphasia. Aphasia is a devastating disease that affects over one million people in the United States and millions more worldwide.

The 281-page manual about aphasia--the loss or diminishment of one's ability to produce or even understand language as the result of a stroke or other brain injury--was written by Helm-Estabrooks and Martin L. Albert, M.D. Both are investigators at the Boston University School of Medicine Aphasia Research Center, part of the Department of Neurology and a facility known worldwide for its research on aphasia, a disease that affects people of all ages.

"This book shows there can be very organized, informed and well-motivated approaches to treating different forms of aphasia and different aspects of aphasia, not just some sort of shotgun approach where we hope to hit upon an effective therapy," says Helm-Estabrooks. "It tells us that probably every aphasiac patient deserves a chance to be treated and that, even in the cases where language seems to be totally lost, there often are ways we can help these patients to communicate," she adds.

Many treatment methods described in the manual were developed to help the very severely aphasic patients, including those with little or no speech capabilities, according to Helm-Estabrooks. "These people often are paralyzed

on one side of their body; this is taken into consideration in our gestural program that requires only one hand.

"Once we get away from the idea that communication is synonymous with speech, we can start to take a different and better view even of patients who have been termed globally aphasic. We can communicate not just through speech, but through gesturing and drawing," she adds.

Although aphasia is recorded in centuries-old medical references, the study of the disease didn't begin until the mid-1800's. One of the first articles of substance on the subject of aphasia therapy, according to Helm-Estabrooks, was written by an American neurologist named Charles Mills, M.D., and published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) in 1904. The next comprehensive paper on aphasia therapy to appear in JAMA was published 84 years later and was written by Albert and Helm-Estabrooks.

The manual by Helm-Estabrooks and Albert discusses clinical research and treatment techniques developed by the two during more than 18 years as research colleagues. Its sections focus on foundations of aphasia rehabilitation, the diagnostic process, the implementation of aphasia therapy and measurement of its effects, specific therapy programs, and the impact of aphasia on the patient and family.

While the manual is primarily for speech and language pathologists, neurologists, neuropsychologists and anyone working in the rehabilitation of brain-damaged patients, lay people also have found it useful. "Many academic books are overwhelming for families, filled with references and professional terms. We tried to write this book in a clear, easy-to-understand manner," says Helm-Estabrooks.

The manual is available from the publisher, PRO-ED, at 8700 Shoal Creek Boulevard, Austin, TX, 78758. The publisher's telephone number is (512) 451-3246.