

Comments to Therapists

The increasing prevalence of brain damage as a result of head trauma, stroke, or a tumor has resulted in a need for therapists skilled in the evaluation and treatment of this population. Materials developed for language-impaired individuals have not always been appropriate, and consequently, there has been an increase in the amount of commercially-available material targeting the brain-injured adult population. Most of these treatment manuals contain activities appropriate for levels of severity that range from mild to severe. Frequently, high-level assessments and treatment activities are mixed with lower-level tasks within the text. Often, they do not provide the comprehensive consideration the executive function disordered population requires. Using tasks designed for low-level patients and increasing the linguistic/attention/memory parameters of the task alone is not sufficient. Activities related to the patient's life and what the patient finds interesting are most likely to be effective. However, it is difficult to find specific task-training activities at the high level that could engage a patient for more than a few minutes, and certainly not an entire treatment course.

Because this book is devoted to rehabilitation practice, it assumes basic knowledge of neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, neurological disease/impairment, and the mechanisms of brain injury. It contains activities for both the therapist and the patient. It is based on the premise that the patient is the best interpreter of his or her particular impairment. It is the therapist's responsibility to ask the right questions in order to obtain this information, substantiate the complaint with evaluation tools, design treatment activities

that address the deficit areas, and monitor progress. This manual provides a structured framework for therapists to guide the processes of evaluation and treatment of patients with executive function disorders.

Results of studies have illustrated the improvement of cognitive functioning via theoretically-based rehabilitation exercises that methodically target specific processes. *The Source for Executive Function Disorders* contains contrived, highly clinical activities systematically targeting specific processes. It goes the extra step, however, to assist the therapist in applying therapeutic remediation to activities in the patient's daily life. Of utmost importance is the therapist's ability to think and analyze. This manual will instruct the therapist in determining which areas and activities are appropriate for each individual client, the structured and systematic presentation of treatment stimuli, and important components of documentation.

Because of the high level of the activities necessary to treat patients with executive function disorders, the therapist must possess a certain level of skill with his or her own executive functions. For example, the therapist will be required to break down tasks into their component parts, train in methods of prioritization, and participate in difficult alternating and divided attention tasks. Just as not every speech-language pathologist has the "ear" to be a good voice therapist, without extra work and effort, not every therapist will fall into executive function treatment easily. Work through the activities in this manual yourself. Try them with your friends and family, and begin to develop a feeling for the wide range of normal.