“It took the spark from him for a little while”: A case study on the psychological impact of parental stroke and aphasia on a young boy.

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Background:
Aphasia is an acquired neurogenic language disorder commonly a result of stroke that has significant and lifelong impacts on communication, participation in activities of daily living, psychological well-being. In addition, aphasia can have a pervasive effect on a family unit due to changes in roles and relationships. Literature on the “insider’s” perspective of aphasia has primarily been from the person with aphasia and their spouses (Parr, 1997), yet literature also suggests children of stroke survivors might be vulnerable to mental health disorders (Kitzmuller et al., 2012; Visser-Meily et al., 2005). There has been little qualitative research exploring the perspectives of the entire family unit, including children, about the psychological impact of aphasia.

Aim:
The aim of this case study was to explore the psychological impact of parental stroke and aphasia on a child aged 5 at the time of the stroke event.

Methods:
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a young boy, his mother and his grandmother. The boy was aged 8 at the time of the interview. His mother had experienced a stroke three years prior resulting in mild fluent aphasia. His grandmother had been living in the same household since the time of stroke to provide practical support. The interviews were conducted via videoconference individually with each participant and were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using qualitative content analysis methodology.

Results:
The results revealed that the stroke event itself represented a significant traumatic experience for the young boy that both his mother and grandmother felt required professional mental health assistance. This was evidenced by consistent expression of negative emotions (fear, anxiety, and stress) throughout the boy’s interview and a reported negative change in personality after the stroke event by both his mother and grandmother. The boy’s mother reported that her aphasia limited her ability to provide emotional support to her son during the time of the stroke crisis. Limited mental health information and support provided by health professionals about stroke and aphasia to the family unit was identified as an area of need that was not addressed.

Conclusion:
This case study highlights how significant the mental health impact of stroke and aphasia can be on child when their parent has a stroke and that this may continue to affect family functioning over time. These preliminary findings suggest the need for further research regarding the initial support provided, the adjustment process, and long-term mental health outcomes for children and families following stroke. It also raises questions as to the role of speech-language pathologists in supporting and advocating for families to access mental health services where a primary care-giver is experiencing communication difficulties.

**Presentation Preference:** No preference