

Treating post-COVID cognitive dysfunction

Set expectations for cognitive rehab

Begin to set expectations for therapy from the first encounter. The role of speech-language pathologists (SLPs) is to teach patients how to manage symptoms of cognitive-communication dysfunction.

Cognitive rehab may include:

- Teaching cognitive pacing and task monitoring.
- Training personalized compensatory strategies.
- Educating patients in order to promote self-efficacy and resilience.

General brain-training games are not recommended, as any improvement in discrete skills has not been shown to carry over into real-life activities.

Use dynamic coaching

Through dynamic coaching, SLPs can promote problem-solving skills in their patients. Patients can learn how to propose, test, and evaluate solutions to their own problems.

The SLP uses the OARS technique:

- Open-ended questions.
- Affirming.
- Reflecting.
- Summarizing.

More weight is given to the patient's perception of their challenges and performance than to what can be objectively measured or observed.

Teach cognitive pacing and task monitoring

SLPs can teach patients about cognitive pacing and task monitoring.

- The Energy Pie from Somers (2018).
- The Spoon Theory from Miserendino (2003).
- Restorative activities that may provide a boost in mental energy.

Train compensatory strategies

SLPs can teach personalized compensatory strategies, such as:

- Goal-Plan-Do-Review.
- Roosevelt matrix.
- Monotasking.
- External memory strategies.
- Word-finding strategies.

Internal memory strategies aren't recommended in general for this population, as using them increases cognitive demand and may trigger a relapse or cognitive crash, which can last for hours or days.

Promote self-efficacy and resilience

Post-COVID cognitive dysfunction can follow a relapsing-remitting pattern and may worsen over time. Teach patients self-efficacy and resilience.

- Teach the relationship between life-style factors and cognitive performance.
- Support patients in trying to improve sleep, nutrition, exercise, stress management, etc.
- Explicitly teach internal versus external locus of control.

- Teach concepts to increase meta-cognitive awareness.
- Prepare patients to advocate for themselves.

Learn more

The primary source for information for this article is Rebecca Boersma's MedBridge Education seminar Management of Cognitive-Communication Disorders in Long COVID.

Find more information: www.eatspeakthink.com/treat-post-covid-cognitive-dysfunction

Selected references

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