NIH Award from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders

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- Project: Language in Primary Progressive Aphasia
- Start Date: July 17, 2009
- Total Award Amount: $106,750

How the results of this project will benefit society:
Primary progressive aphasia (PPA) is a form of dementia that can occur in individuals under the age of 65 (and sometimes as early as in the 40s), and involves a decline in one or more language functions. It is due to brain cell degeneration. PPA constitutes the only adult-onset disease that selectively attacks the language network in the brain. PPA patients suffer from aphasic disturbances that deserve to be characterized more fully, especially since the early stages of the disease are compatible with effective therapeutic interventions. The slow dissolution of language abilities in PPA offers a unique setting, not duplicated by any other aphasic disturbance, for investigating the neurocognitive organization of language.

The problem the project is trying to solve:
The goal of the project is to investigate the language disorder and treatment modalities in PPA. The approach is multidisciplinary and will include experts in neurology, speech pathology, neuropsychology, electrophysiology and imaging. The methods will include chronometric neurolinguistic investigations, event-related potentials, voxel based morphometry and diffusion tensor imaging.

How this project will work:
The relative scarcity of PPA patients, the temporal progression of the disease, and the wide catchment area needed to recruit a sufficient number of patients create a situation where the integrated work of a multidisciplinary team is the most efficient way to conduct a research program focusing on this syndrome. The project has been proposed by a team of investigators who have worked on PPA for many years and have collaborated extensively. The patients will be recruited from a clinic that is one of the world’s most readily recognized referral centers for PPA. The work will use the resources of the Northwestern Alzheimer’s Disease Center in a way that will enhance economy of effort.
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