



Mailing address:
Unit E 1300 18th Street, Office 156, Brandon Mb, R7A 6X7

westmanaphasia@gmail.com

www.westmanaphasia.ca

Communication is much more than words

Recent information about actor Bruce Willis being diagnosed with the chronic communication disorder known as aphasia may have caused some confusion as to the type of disorder aphasia is. The following information from Westman Aphasia Inc. clarifies this and explains aphasia's causes and effects.

Aphasia is not a cognitive issue

BRANDON/April 26, 2022: The recent news of actor Bruce Willis having aphasia has put the spotlight on this language and communication disorder. The family stated that his aphasia is “impacting his cognitive abilities,” but they have not shared the cause of his aphasia.

Aphasia involves the impairment of the ability to use or understand words. It can cause difficulty with finding words to express oneself, as well as difficulty with reading or writing words and sentences. Aphasia alone is a language and communication disorder and is **not** an intellectual or cognitive disability.

Aphasia is an acquired disorder due to the result of damage to parts of the brain responsible for language. It can occur suddenly following a stroke, its most common cause, or with a head injury. Aphasia can also develop slowly with a brain tumor or with chronic progressive diseases of the brain such as Alzheimer’s, vascular dementia, or Primary Progressive Aphasia (<https://alzheimer.mb.ca/>).

Aphasia after a stroke often improves in the first year, especially with aggressive speech therapy. But, with dementia, the communication abilities will decline as the disease progresses.

Regardless of the cause, education about aphasia and communication strategies, as well as emotional and social support, will improve the quality of life of individuals with aphasia and their caregivers and families.

Westman Aphasia provides this education, support, public awareness, community outreach, and much more. We **can** help, so please contact us at westmanaphasia@gmail.com, or visit our website at www.westmanaphasia.ca.

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Westman Aphasia's mission is to help persons with aphasia and those around them by providing support services and public education to improve their quality of life

