

Can intensive practice of voice exercises improve speech in people with Friedreich's ataxia?

Communication problems are a frequent consequence of ataxia, but there is currently no effective treatment for speech problems that has been properly evaluated. However, a few small pilot studies have recently demonstrated that speech therapy can help people with ataxia with their communication.

In two of those studies, funded by Ataxia UK, we demonstrated that speech therapy focusing on good voice production and clear articulation can help some people with ataxia to improve their speech and their confidence in communicating with others. These treatments were delivered online in participants' homes, either individually or in groups. Before we proceed to investigating their effectiveness on a larger scale, we want to try out one more therapy model to decide which is the best approach for people with progressive ataxia. The current study will provide intensive one to one input with a speech and language therapist working on voice, again in an online format. Altogether, your involvement would last around 8 months in total including a 4 week no treatment period before therapy with assessments at the start and end of this, 4 weeks of therapy input consisting of four 1-hour sessions per week, and two further assessments at the end, one immediately and another 6 months after treatment finishes. This study is funded by LSVT Global and researchers at Strathclyde University in Glasgow.

To be able to take part, you need to fulfil the following criteria:

- Have a confirmed diagnosis of Friedreich's ataxia
- Experience mild to moderate speech or voice problems, which means people can still understand most of what you say although they might need to listen more carefully
- Not have any other neurological or speech problems
- Not have received speech and language therapy treatment in the past 2 years, or LSVT at any point
- Be aged 18 or over
- Have access to the necessary technology (good internet connection, access to a computer, tablet or smartphone for using video conferencing software)
- be a native English speaker

If you are interested in participating, please get in touch with us by phone or email and we will send you more detailed information. Please contact:

Anja Lowit
Speech and Language Therapy Unit
School of Psychological Sciences and Health
Strathclyde University
Tel: 07986080537
Email: a.lowit@strath.ac.uk