A Toolkit to Support Elderly with Communication Difficulties During Societal Crisis

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Problem

Crisis and contingency work relies on everyone preparing thoroughly. For elderly individuals with communication difficulties, crisis directives can be hard to find, understand, and implement. To plan effectively and respond decisively, crisis workers must understand the needs of the entire population.

Purpose

To test a communication supporting toolkit to be used:

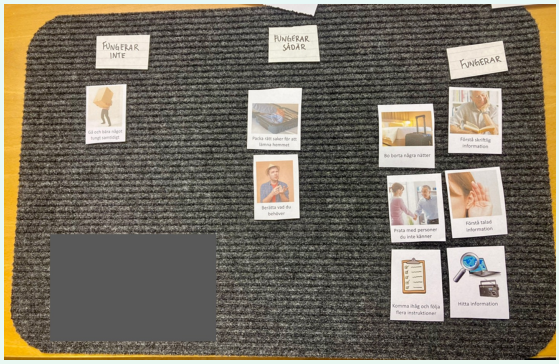
- by professionals untrained in alternative communication
- in all stages of a crisis (preparation, response, recovery).

Method

Toolkit development: A toolkit was constructed based on research in speech and language pathology and inclusive disaster risk reduction.
Testing the toolkit: individual interviews and group workshop with elderly with aphasia (n= 3), a questionnaire for people with aphasia (n=16), interviews with experts (n=3).

The Toolkit

- Selected techniques from the **Supported Conversations for Adults with Aphasia** (SCA) method, containing written key words, drawing stick figures, and using prepared picture symbols.
- Selected techniques from the **Talking Mats** framework, organizing picture symbols along a three-level visual analogue scale to express preferences.
- A **cognitively adapted Likert type scale**



Results

The toolkit enabled participants to:
- understand questions
- respond simply and elaborate if desired

The toolkit enabled interviewer to:
- recognize the competence of participants with aphasia
- communicate questions clearly
- collect responses effectively

The toolkit **did not:**
- facilitate dialogue between participants

Conclusions

The toolkit can be useful to interview elderly with communication difficulties, including elderly with aphasia, on the topic of crisis and preparedness. The toolkit is suitable both in individual and group settings, although participants may need more support to engage in dialogue with others.

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