

LSVT®: Effective and Efficacious Speech and Voice Treatment for Individuals with Parkinson Disease and Other Neurological Disorders

By: Amy King, MS, CCC-SLP

The Lee Silverman Voice Treatment (LSVT®) is the first effective treatment for individuals with voice and speech disorders due to Parkinson Disease and other neurological disorders. Its primary goal is to restore or improve oral communication in these individuals beyond current surgical and pharmacological interventions¹.

Patients with Parkinson Disease often demonstrate reduced functional communication skills due to soft voice, monotone, hoarse voice quality and imprecise articulation. LSVT® aims to improve both the voice and speech of individuals with Parkinson disease by recognizing and treating the physical pathology associated with the disordered voice². Individuals with other neurological disorders such as multiple sclerosis, stroke, ataxic dysarthria, aging voice, vocal fold paralysis, as well as, individuals with Down syndrome and cerebral palsy also demonstrate decreased functional communication skills due to speech and voice disorders. Recently, LSVT® has also been successfully applied to this population³.

The LSVT® therapy has one central focus: increased vocal loudness. This target facilitates increased effort and coordination across the entire speech production system. Daily tasks are designed to maximize efficiency of phonation, improve vocal fold closure, increase respiratory and laryngeal coordination, improve intonation, increase vertical laryngeal movement (may improve swallowing function), and assist the patient in carryover and maintenance of a louder voice into daily conversation. These tasks are simple and generate a comprehensive motor organizing theme which in turn impacts many levels of the motor output process in patients⁴.

Improvement of loudness and carryover of new techniques into daily communication is emphasized providing patients with the tools necessary to maintain and/or improve their oral communication². Following one month of treatment, patients demonstrate significantly improved functional communication and are able to self generate treatment strategies. Additionally, LSVT® empowers individuals to maintain or regain functioning in multiple environments increasing self-confidence and quality of life. According to clinical studies, all patients report increased communication abilities and 90% of patients improve from pre-to post-treatment². Following LSVT®, family members, caregivers and professionals report that patients are more effective and emotionally engaged communicators⁴.

The Lee Silverman Voice Treatment can only be provided by speech-language pathologists who are trained and certified by the LSVT® foundation. For more information please visit LSVT.org or contact the LSVT® foundation at 1-888-606-5788.

References

¹Shultz GM, Grant MK. Effects of speech therapy and pharmacologic and surgical treatments on voice and speech in Parkinson's disease: a review of the literature. Journal of Communication Disorders 2000; 33, 59-88.

²Ramig, L., Fox, C. (2003). LSVT® Fact Sheet. LSVT® Training and Certification Workshop Manual 2004, 6-9.

³Sapir, S., Spielman, J., Countryman, S., Ramig, L., Fox, C., Hinds, S., & Story, B. (in Review). Phonatory and articulatory changes in ataxic dysarthria following intensive voice therapy with LSVT®: A single subject study.

⁴Liotti, M., Vogel, D., Ramig, L., New, P., Cook, C., & Fox, P. (2003). Functional Reorganization of speech-motor function in Parkinson disease following LSVT®: A PET study. Neurology, 60, 432-440.
