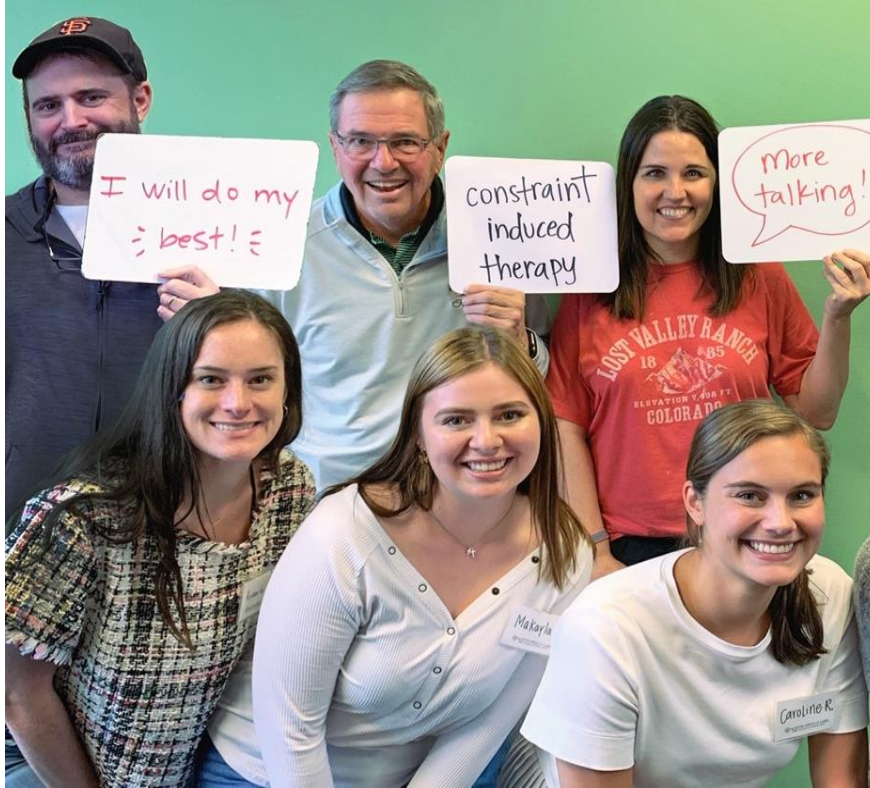




# AUSTIN SPEECH LABS

stroke recovery one word at a time



## 2020 Boot Camp Dates

- January 20<sup>th</sup> - March 13<sup>th</sup>
- March 30<sup>th</sup> - May 22<sup>nd</sup>
- June 8<sup>th</sup> - August 7<sup>th</sup>
- September 8<sup>th</sup> - October 30<sup>th</sup>
- November 3<sup>rd</sup> - December 18<sup>th</sup>



Join our caregivers every Monday. More information on page 7.

## I CAN TALK

“I CAN TALK. I AM DETERMINED. I WILL DO MY BEST. I AM IN CHARGE OF MY SPEECH. I WILL CHOOSE TO TALK.” Now read it again, but this time imagine what it must be like for a stroke survivor to say these words. That’s how each Constraint Induced Therapy session starts out, whether it’s a group of four or an individual: the therapist says the affirmation and the client repeats it. These are clients that have been working for years to talk, and now we’re asking them to say something they may not believe, but desperately want. What we’ve noticed is they are starting to believe, and with that belief comes more confidence and more attempts to get their words out. Initially, they repeated the words, but they were soft and hesitant, now, they come out steady and sure. This fall, we have started using Constraint-Induced Aphasia Therapy (CIAT) at Austin Speech Labs. This type of therapy strongly discourages non-verbal communication (e.g. gestures, pointing, use of phone, writing, facial expressions) and strongly encourages all VERBAL output. [Continued on Page 8.](#)

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# Post Stroke Recovery: Not for the Faint Hearted



In January 2010, a gentleman with a walker came through the doors of Austin Speech Labs. He had a stroke on July 28, 2009 and wanted an evaluation. His diagnosis was made apparent with the few unrecognizable words he struggled to produce. He was suffering from aphasia and apraxia following a catastrophic stroke. This dedicated gentleman was Jon Schubkegel.

One thing that was immediately clear was Jon's perseverance. After enrolling in the program, he made it a priority to attend every session. He was there, five days a week, three hours a day for the first two years. Even when he couldn't make it into the office, he opted to partake in teletherapy. After seeing steady improvements, he reduced his sessions to three days a week and has been coming for the past seven years.

With the support of his community, Jon constantly works toward further recovery. While he is going through intensive speech therapy, his community supports him in his victories and helps him overcome obstacles that occur. Jon's wife, Donna, insists that he continue to work on his own outside of therapy and encourages him to use words at home despite the frustration and struggle. Together they embrace the hardships and turn to laughter in those moments when his wife misinterprets him, or Jon says something that she can't understand. Donna's tough love doesn't stop there.

Helping someone recover from a stroke means letting them go through challenges while being there to support them. It takes compassion and resiliency to be patient and celebrate every bit of progress. When Jon is asked a question that stumps him, he looks to his wife, hoping she will answer for him. Donna lets him answer it. Silence may follow for a little bit, but Jon eventually responds and knows he is better because of it.

Over the years, our speech therapists have continued to design and develop innovative approaches to address the needs of stroke survivors like Jon. We have developed treatments and techniques including phonological treatment for reading and writing, and constraint-induced therapy that encourages survivors to talk. We have even expanded neurological music therapy to give survivors a creative outlet to practice fluency.

On Nov 9<sup>th</sup>, during the Year End Celebration, Jon walked up to the stage alongside his wife. He looked to the crowd and then to his wife. After a moment of silence, Jon began to grin, grabbed the microphone and proceeded to effortlessly tell his story next to his supportive wife who stood there holding back tears of joy.

If not for the affordable cost of Austin Speech Labs, Jon could not have attended therapy for 9 years to regain his speech and none of his family nor our community would have heard Jon speak effortlessly again after his stroke.

Jon is just one of 156 stroke survivors this year at Austin Speech Labs that strive to regain their ability to talk, read, and write again with the help of innovative techniques, compassionate support, and a dedicated community. To all those who support Austin Speech Labs, it is your compassion and collaboration that allow us to continue offering unique therapy approaches to people like Jon for as long as they need to improve.

We could not do it without you all.  
THANK YOU!

*Shilpa Shamapant*

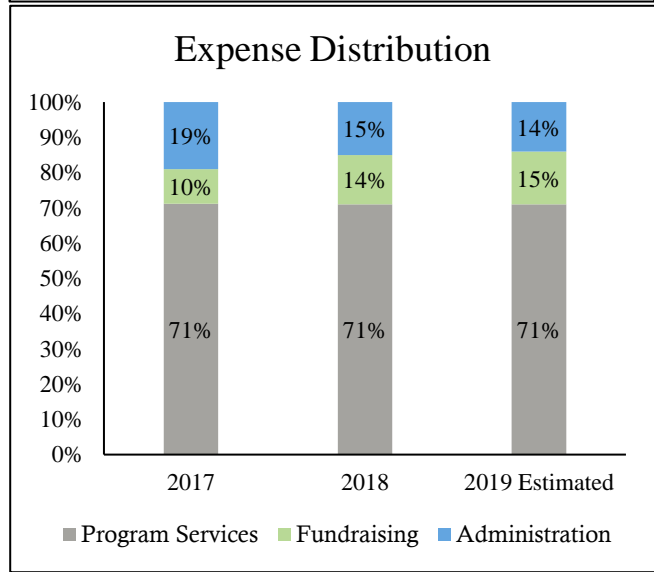
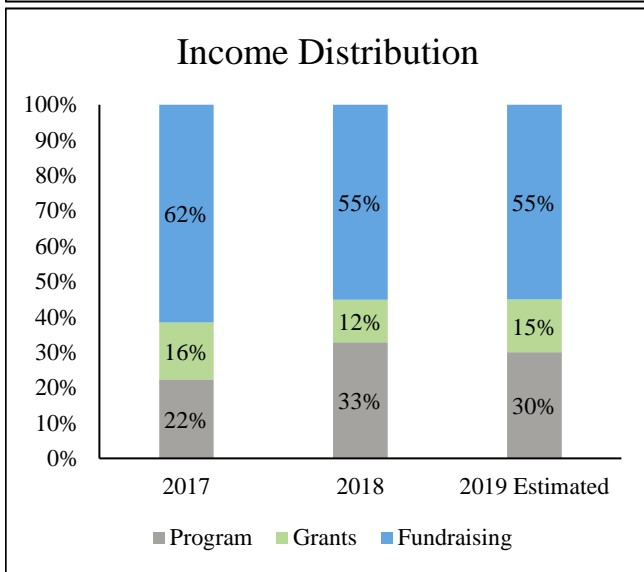
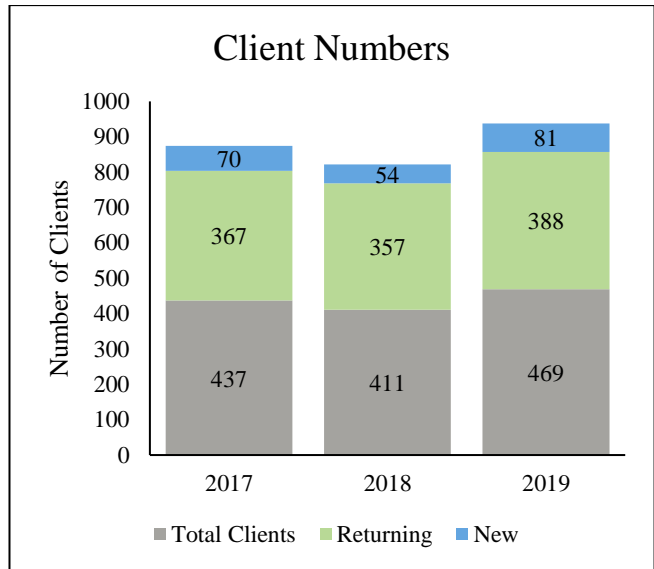
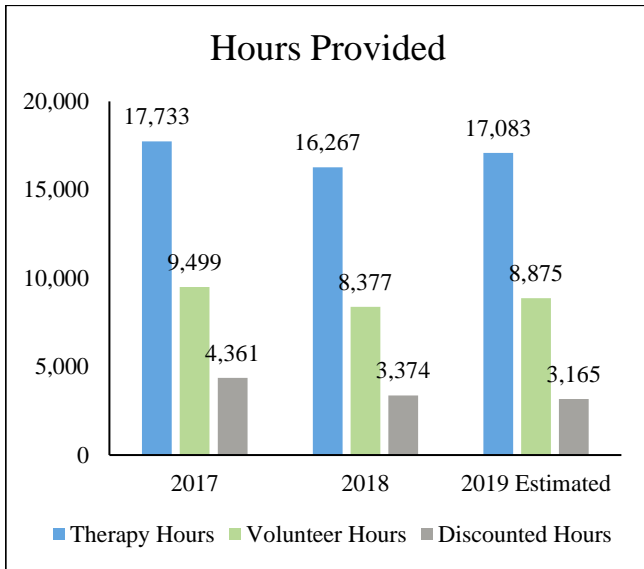
Shilpa Shamapant  
President, Cofounder



Jon and his wife Donna at our Year End Celebration.

# Austin Speech Labs Growth

## 2017-2019



## Research

Austin Speech Labs is constantly looking for ways to improve our therapy techniques. This search includes evaluating what effect our approach has had in the past years, collaborating with other institutions in aphasia research, and developing new therapy techniques. This year we are involved in not one, not two, but THREE different research studies. First, we partnered with Boston University to recruit participants for a bilingual treatment focused on naming. Second, our very own Bri Fairley designed and implemented a study focused on Constraint Induced Aphasia Therapy (CIAT.) Finally, we partnered with Vanderbilt University and The University of at Austin to study The Neural Effects of Intensive Therapy. Turn to page 8 to find out more about each of these studies.



# One Word At A Time

On May 2nd, 2019, Austin Speech Labs held our annual fundraising event, One Word At A Time. The event was presented by the Nelson Puett Foundation and was an opportunity to share with our supporters and community our successes, challenges and goals for the next few years. Our longtime friend and advisory board member, Dr. Thomas Hill, was the emcee for the evening. Dr. Hill has provided exceptional support and advice to this organization since it started in 2008. He was the neurologist for many of our stroke survivors and helped guide many clients and caregivers through the difficult journey of stroke recovery until his retirement in 2018.

One of the highlights of the evening was hearing from our clients and caregivers. We'd like to thank Louise Michaud (client), Judsonia Sanford (caregiver) and Daniel Velazquez (client) for sharing their inspirational stories. They have conquered many battles to be able to stand behind the microphone and share their experiences with us. It is through their words that we better understand the long hard fight of our stroke survivors.

We ended the evening with our keynote speaker, Dr. Steven Warach. Dr. Warach is a professor of Neurology at The University of Texas at Austin's Dell Medical School, Executive Director of the Seton-Dell Medical School Stroke Institute, and Chair of the Lone Star Stroke Research Consortium. Dr. Warach developed and led stroke clinical centers and training programs at Harvard's Beth Israel Hospital and at the National Institutes of Health before moving to Austin. Dr. Warach educated the audience on the latest research in stroke recovery. But most importantly, he explained how he was a skeptic of long-term recovery. After working closely with Austin Speech Labs and seeing the results he has come to not only believe, but he has become one of our strongest allies. We could not ask for a greater seal of approval than from one of the leading doctors in neurology.

We are beyond thankful to Laura York for taking on the monumental task of organizing another hugely successful evening. We were able to raise over \$460,000 to support stroke survivors and continue to serve our mission. We are looking forward to our next celebration on May 7th, 2020 at the Four Seasons Hotel.



# A Board Member's Journey

By Robert Hollingsworth



Not long after introducing my wife and me to Indian food, my friend Venu invited us to join him and his wife, Shilpa Shamapant, for an Indian meal. Not only was the food amazing, but we also learned about Austin Speech Labs and the challenging work being done at this nonprofit. All I knew about strokes was that they seem to be indifferent to candidates and the impact on those lucky enough to survive is typically life-changing for the stroke survivor as well as their family.

We learned about the Austin Speech Labs mission and were happy to schedule a seat for the annual fundraising event, One Word At A Time. The event provided a chance to engage with many stroke survivors and caregivers. The structure of the event was unique because the center of attention was the stroke survivors. Listening to stroke survivors speak in front of a crowd and tell their stories was emotional and inspirational as well as a dramatic demonstration of the capabilities of Austin Speech Labs.

Although Austin Speech Labs is one of 8,000 or so nonprofits in Central Texas, there is a special difference that needs to be highlighted. Austin Speech Labs is developing new therapy techniques that incorporate technology to retrain the brain after a stroke. Clients are a critical part of this development process. Without stroke survivors' determination to improve their lives, the progress at Austin Speech Labs would not be possible.

If any of the readers of this newsletter are (like me) over the age of 70, they are aware of the fact that at this age it is mandatory for each of us to draw down funds from individual retirement accounts. The government has a formula that is used to calculate the annual amount required, and failure to meet that minimum (known as the Required Minimum Distribution) will incur a tax penalty. If an individual asks their financial institution to distribute a portion of their RMD directly to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit (like Austin Speech Labs), the amount of that distribution is free from federal income taxes. Of course, the donation cannot become a deductible contribution, but the donation counts as a part of the RMD. In order to continue advancing therapy research, Austin Speech Labs will have to increase R&D funding while also collaborating with other institutions, all while supporting a growing population of Texas-based stroke survivors. The financial support for this body of work has never been more important.

In late 2017 Shilpa asked me to consider becoming a member of the Board of Directors for Austin Speech Labs. My first thoughts were that I was unqualified for such a role. Anyone who has had the honor of debating with Shilpa knows that my protests fell on deaf ears. Shilpa explained to me that Austin Speech Labs was shifting its focus to the use of technology, and my experience in that arena, along with my overall experience operating businesses were valuable. She successfully convinced me to take on the responsibility. I also had conversations with Adi Mishra, the current Board Chairman, who explained to me that the fiduciary responsibility for a Board member in a nonprofit is split between executing the promises made when raising money from donors and the obligation to maintain support for the stroke survivors. I have relied on these key principles in my role as a member of the Austin Speech Labs Board.

## World Stroke Day

In 2006, the World Stroke Organization established World Stroke Day (October 29<sup>th</sup>) as a way to raise awareness and reduce the incidence of stroke around the world. Because stroke is the single largest cause of disability in the United States their mission was to educate people of the risk factors associated with stroke in order to help prevent occurrences. These risk factors include high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, smoking, age and gender, ethnicity, and personal family history.

For the past three years, Austin Speech Labs has done our part to educate our community about their risk, as well as connect survivors and caregivers to the exceptional resources in our own back yard.

This year we had 30 vendors and over 50 community members attend the event. The community members received free health screeners for BMI, blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol, vision and hearing, provided by UT Project Collaborate, UT Nursing Students, Central Texas Hearing Center, and The Optometry Center for Vision Therapy. Burgers were cooked by Chopped Chef and stroke survivor, Zack Northcutt. Physical Therapy students from St. Augustine did balance checks, and guest were entertained with live music by local musicians and stroke survivors.







## Music Therapy Through Time

By Bri Rocha

“Music is a moral law. It gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, and life to everything.” – Plato

Using music as a method of healing the mind, body, and spirit can be found in writings from both Aristotle and Plato, among others. The profession of Music Therapy began after World War I when musicians visited veteran hospitals and played for individuals who were suffering from both physical and emotional trauma. Doctors began asking for musicians to be hired when they noticed the positive effects on their patients. Soon, it was evident that some type of training was necessary, and that began the demand for a developed curriculum in order to properly prepare the musicians.

In 1944 Michigan State University was the first to create an academic institution for Music Therapy. There are now over 70 universities and colleges that offer MT degree programs in the U.S. The profession has been rapidly growing over the years, with over 8,000 music therapists who hold the MT-BC (Music Therapist-Board Certified) credential. The field has also expanded into professional practice in over 30 countries.

Music therapists serve in a variety of populations across the span of life. We help pre-mature infants regulate their respiration, help adolescents and adults navigate mental health journeys, provide comfort and distraction for those receiving chemotherapy, provide inclusive environments for children with atypical development, and can assist someone into their end of life cycle. I am proud to serve clients at Austin Speech Labs, and appreciate the moments where music drives the change to better one's speech and communication. Whether I'm helping someone with word finding, easing speech fluency, improving articulation, or distracting someone from a hard day, I try and never take for granted the fact that I get to do my favorite thing every day; make music.

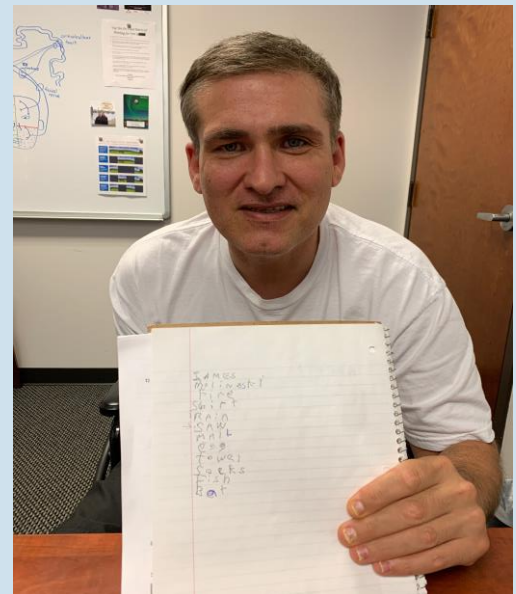
## Small Victories



After years of hard work, Patterson passed his citizenship test! We're so happy to have him!



Hunter had his stroke in 2017. He was persistent and was able to start working again this year.



James is a force to be reckoned with. When he started with us in October, he was able to say three words. Today with the use of music therapy and continued speech therapy he is able to say sixty-five words and is even starting to say some phrases!

# The Last Seven Years By Mayra Carrera

My journey with Austin Speech Labs began as a volunteer while an undergraduate student at the University of Texas at Austin. When I began my studies, my goal was to work with children; however, in the summer of 2011 that all changed. I learned of Austin Speech Labs (ASL) through a classmate that had previously volunteered here. She spoke with great enthusiasm about the opportunity, so I decided to experience it for myself. I had volunteered at other facilities; but, ASL was unique in that it allowed me to work directly with clients and cultivate relationships while progressing towards their respective goals. From that moment on I was hooked. When I graduated the following spring, a position for a Speech Language Pathologist Assistant (SLPA) opened and I was officially hired in July of 2012.

In the last seven years I've learned so much from my clients and their caregivers. They've taught me the true meaning of hard work and dedication by showing up determined to do what it takes to reach their goals. Some days are filled with laughter, others with tears and frustrations. Nevertheless, they show up and make strides toward recovery. One day while working through a particularly challenging task for a client, he stopped, looked me in the eyes and said, "I've been through a lot of things in my life, but this is the hardest thing I've ever had to do." This impacted me greatly. A stroke is a life altering event and one of the most difficult challenges to recover from. ASL cultivates a unique environment and a sense of community for our stroke survivors and their loved ones. In a time when life is upside down and nothing is like it used to be, ASL provides the space to be vulnerable and comfort in knowing there is always someone who is willing to guide them in the most difficult times of the stroke recovery journey.

As a therapist, another thing I appreciate about ASL is our freedom to try new and innovative techniques. This session we started a guided autobiography group geared towards helping our clients write their stroke stories. This group has not only helped our clients target writing skills in a unique way, but as I've read through their stories, it has allowed me to better understand their individuality. It has given me a deeper understanding of each of them as a whole and has helped me be a better therapist. This freedom to explore, at its core, has the ability to help our stroke survivors continue to make progress towards their goals.

It has been a privilege to work at Austin Speech Labs for the last seven years. I've seen ASL grow from a four room office space serving twenty clients to 12 office spaces and over 90 clients per boot camp. It's easy to come to work every day because at the end of the day what we do here at Austin Speech Labs changes lives. I'm honored to be a small part of that change.



Mayra working as an intern in the summer of 2011. Mayra is in the back-left corner.



Mayra working with client, Catherine Mayfield Davis. Mayra helps run our Bilingual study and helps manage the clinic. She recently started an autobiography group for survivors to recount their experiences.

## Caregiver's Corner

Our first annual Missy McCarroll Caregiver Award was presented at our annual event, One Word At A Time. The award was given to Missy for all her hard work, dedication and guidance to the growth of Austin Speech Labs over the past 11 years. Missy has chaired our annual event multiple times, she has sat on our board, she has been on every fundraising committee, and she has provided countless hours of support and advice to this organization. We are so thankful for all that she has done to help us grow this organization in ways we never thought possible.



Join us!



# Research Corner: 1. Constraint Induced Aphasia Therapy

Constraint Induced Therapy is most beneficial for people who are working on increasing their fluency and have a primary goal of getting out more words.

## Cell Phone Lock-Up

To facilitate this therapy, we clear the table of pencils, pens, and dry erase markers. We put all of the clients' cell phones (and the therapist's phone - hey, it's only fair) in the "cell phone jail" for the duration of therapy. The focus is entirely on our words, practicing our speech, and encouraging each other.

## Practice Makes Progress

Research for CIAT shows that results are best when caregivers, family, and friends are involved. This means continuing to use as many words as possible outside of therapy! Our clients have been completing extra homework, logging their activities, and turning in their practice sheets. Commitment is key.

## Volunteer Support

Many of our volunteers have also been trained to help facilitate CIAT. They have learned to provide appropriate cues and steer our clients away from non-verbal forms of communication and toward speech. This therapy relies on building self-confidence and getting positive reinforcement. A major role that the volunteers play is offering encouragement, even if the client's speech is not perfect or 100% grammatically correct.

## Results

CIAT is already yielding significant results. On average, clients have produced 78% more sentences in post-testing than in pre-testing. This project is ongoing, and we look forward to seeing the continued impacts of CIAT.



## 2. Neural Effects of Intensive Therapy

Austin Speech Labs has partnered with The University of Texas at Austin and Vanderbilt University to study how intensive speech therapy causes physiological neural changes in post stroke patients with aphasia.

Participants undergo language testing and are given an fMRI pre and post boot camp. We can then compare the results of the language battery and the fMRI to look for changes in the functional organization of a patient's language network.

Craig participated in the study and he said, "It was awesome. I really felt like I learned something. I know I improved a lot. Seeing the results motivated me to continue doing my therapy."

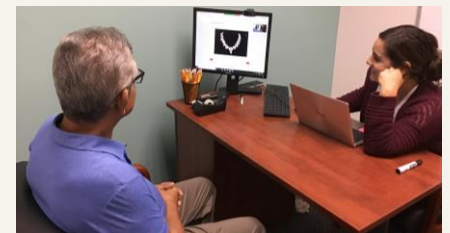


## 3. Bilingual Aphasia

Austin Speech Labs is working in collaboration with Boston University to study how the language of treatment administered affects the language abilities of bilingual stroke survivors.

This study is currently enrolling. We are seeking stroke survivors who are bilingual in English and Spanish. Enrolled participants receive **free therapy**, which targets word-finding difficulties. With enough participants, we can develop a tool that will help therapists optimize their treatment plan for bilingual clients.

Please contact Mayra Carrera at [mayra@austinspeechlabs.org](mailto:mayra@austinspeechlabs.org) or call Austin Speech Labs at 512.992.0575 for more information about enrollment!





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