

“My grandchildren will recognise my voice as Grandad and not a stranger’s voice”

Voice banking for our patients living with Motor Neurone Disease

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What is voice banking?

Voice banking is a process that allows recording of a set list of phrases with the patient’s own natural voice. This recording is then converted to create a personal synthetic voice. This synthetic voice can be used in speech-generating communication devices (AAC devices) to generate an infinite number of words and sentences.

Introduction (Why?)

Speech can deteriorate over a period of a few months and is cited by people living with MND as one of the most problematic symptoms (Raheja, D., et al, 2016). Over 80% of patients living with MND (plwMND) will become unable to communicate their daily needs using natural speech alone (D Beukelman, Fager, & Nordness, 2011) and most will eventually use AAC to support their daily communication (Ball, Beukelman, & Pattee, 2004).

Voice banking is now a well-publicised intervention for plwMND and recent improvements in text-to-speech technology and voice banking software has meant this intervention is more achievable. The evidence currently available for this process is subjective and not necessarily quantitative in nature.

How does it work at ELHT?

The SLT identifies suitable patient or voice donor for the process during the initial visit/contact with SLT. If patient consents, SLT can begin the process. The patient is set up with their own voice banking account and loaned equipment. ELHT SLT has a combination of our own departmental equipment for loan but can also contact the MNDA when further equipment or advice is needed.

Following the initial set up, the assistant practitioner is also heavily involved in maintaining communication with patient/voice donor whilst they are completing their banking and providing support and encouragement to persevere! This can be done via face to face visits or by telephone as agreed with patient.

The stats...

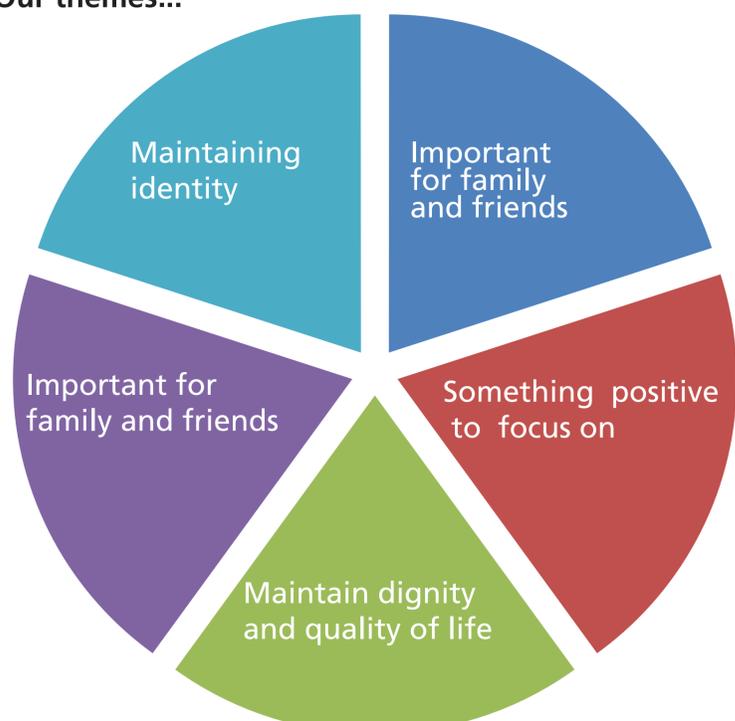
- 10 completed by the patient themselves
- 4 currently underway
- 3 completed by a relative/friend i.e. “voice donors”
- 2 did not complete

Lessons we’ve learned/advice

- Need to continue to raise awareness of this to prompt EARLY REFERRAL
- The process is relatively easy to implement
- Continually revisit the topic in case the patient has changed their mind
- Use other voice banked voices as a demonstration of what the end result is like
- The high emotional and social impact of voice banking
- Be clear on goals – make sure the patient knows that the voice they put in will be the voice they get out, not an improved version.
- Fatigue management strategies
- Support is available from the MNDA if you aren’t a “techy” SLT!

Why Voice bank?

Our themes...



Our story so far...

- Voice banking is now a fully embedded service within SLT at ELHT since 2016. We have an standard operating procedure (SOP). The majority of these being completed in 2018 and 2019 identifying the increase in awareness of this process and the importance and value our patients place on storing their voices if they need to use them in the future.
- Nomination for ELHT Star Award and in local press and two radio interviews.

Future plans and forward thinking

- Training colleagues in other specialisms e.g. neuro rehab & head and neck cancer. We hope to capture other client groups who may eventually lose their own voice.
- Expanding to different software (Modeltalker & Acapela).