

The **remarkable Dr Jenny Dautlich** was a **keynote speaker** at The Aphasia Association of New Zealand's biennial Conference in November last year, held in Rotorua, in New Zealand's north island. The aim of the conference was to raise awareness about aphasia and encourage people to discuss it publicly. In addition, the conference provides an opportunity for people with aphasia, their family and friends, as well as professionals, to get together, share ideas, feelings and thoughts in a supportive environment.

There were **two international speakers**, one was Dr Robyn O'Halloran, from La Trobe University, Melbourne and the other Dr Jenny Dautlich, founder of AphasiaNow and a key member of GlosSpeak, a local self help group for people with aphasia.

Henrietta, Duchess of Bedford, who opened the conference, which was held in Rotorua on 16–18 November, said. "We were so impressed by this three day conference. It was the perfect balance of people with aphasia, carers and professionals who work in the field of aphasia. Everyone was welcome to attend all the sessions, but there was one afternoon symposium that was dedicated to academic papers and discussion. It was a very uplifting and interesting few days".

The conference focused on the theme 'I am still me'. Robyn O'Halloran spoke on Creating Accessible Environments for People with Aphasia. During her insightful talk, she announced that an international sign for communication disability was being launched that week in Australia, by an organisation called Scope. It is thought that, initially, this sign is intended for use in shops where the staff will have been trained to understand something about communication disabilities.



Jenny Dautlich gave two inspirational keynote speeches about her experience of stroke and aphasia and her approach to recovery. The theme of her two talks was '**helping yourself**' and '**helping others**'. Jenny's talks were filled with insight and practical steps that she had taken. Both talks were a powerful and moving testimony of how someone can turn a traumatic event, which could have been only negative, into something personally enriching and which she has used

for the good of so many, through **her work at GlosSpeak and AphasiaNow.**

Throughout the conference there were a number of workshops including music, games, singing, art, aphasia therapy software and personal stories. One afternoon was dedicated to a symposium that covered subjects as diverse as 'Intensive Communication Therapy' by Dr. Patty Govender, Massey University to 'The value of aphasia groups in fostering positive identity' by Dr Maxine Bevin.

Overall, many thought it one of the best conferences that they had ever had the privilege of attending. The organisers, especially Kate Milford, Clare McCann and Emma Castle were congratulated for all their hard work that produced such an excellent event.



Jenny's sister who travelled to New Zealand with her, Dr Jenny Dautlich, Henrietta, Duchess of Bedford at the Conference

written by a conference delegate