

# Anterograde amnesia

Science



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Anterograde Amnesia Most of us take for granted our ability to recall aspects of the past. We may sulk at having to memorize long lists of notes in preparation for an exam. However, many of us do not realize that there are numerous people who suffer from anterograde amnesia due to a severe mental or physical trauma. These individuals struggle to perform tasks that involve even the most menial forms of memorization. Many researchers intrigued with the topic of anterograde amnesia have written scientific articles on the condition, some describing specific aspects of the memory deficit while others investigating possible treatments for it. Two articles concerning anterograde amnesia, " SenseCam as a rehabilitation tool in a child with anterograde amnesia" by Pauly-Takacs et al. and " Widespread cognitive impairment in psychogenic anterograde amnesia" by Kumar et al., each explore the subject in a different light. Pauly-Takacs et al. describes a case study to propose SenseCam as a possible treatment for the condition, as well as provides general information regarding the topic to establish the intended audience as one of ordinary people. Kumar et al. wrote his article to inform the scientific community about a specific type of anterograde amnesia and its effects on overall mental ability, and he uses scientific terms without clarifying their meanings in order to target his writing for an audience of experts. In her article, Pauly-Takacs et al. includes information about a study involving SenseCam as a method to enhance memory retention for a young boy suffering from anterograde amnesia. Thirteen-year-old CJ developed the amnesia after removal of a brain tumor and treatment of chemotherapy and radiotherapy (p. 705). The author almost immediately establishes her credibility in the article by stating that radiotherapy's detrimental effects on cognition have already been " well

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documented" (p. 705). She also provides a multitude of sources throughout the article, suggesting that she has thoroughly researched the topic and is well-informed. Pauly-Takacs et al. includes in her article descriptive background information, which establishes it as one written for an audience of ordinary people who do not know much about the subject. For example, she describes the main changes in the brain that cause the post-treatment amnesia, as well as defines the two memory systems involved in the study: episodic and semantic. The author's purpose in writing this article was to inform the general public about a possibly effective rehabilitation technique through the use of SenseCam. It is also implied that the author would like to see future experiments with SenseCam, as she states that the device would be useful in other case studies involving semantic memory (p. 711). In the second article, Kumar et al. provides insight on a patient with a certain type of anterograde amnesia originating from a mental trauma, as well as describes the various cognitive consequences of the condition. Since the author uses words such as "bilateral modified electroconvulsive therapy" (p. 583) and "working memory and remote memory" (p. 584) without any further description, it is evident that he wrote this article for scientists working in the same field. Also, the author provides information on a specific type of anterograde amnesia that will certainly be irrelevant to the mainstream audience. Kumar et al. institutes his authority and demonstrates his in-depth knowledge on the subject by implementing a variety of scientific vocabulary and by providing detailed cognitive assessments of the patient with psychogenic anterograde amnesia. He also uses a variety of sources throughout the article, especially during his description of the assessments. Towards the end of the article, Kumar et al. asserts that an increase in

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glucocorticoids may be a possible explanation for the cognitive effects of the disorder (p. 584). In stating this, it seems as though he would like to see more scientific research conducted in the future concerning the role of glucocorticoids in psychogenic anterograde amnesia. Although both articles were written on the same topic of anterograde amnesia, they contained many similarities and differences. One similarity is that both of them were presented as informative experiments, each involving a case study on a cognitively impaired patient. The scientific nature of the articles is unique in the sense that it presents a problem in a purely informative and unbiased manner. Unlike other pieces of writing, these scientific articles provide charts with content used as evidence, and they do not attempt to sway the opinions of the readers. The two writings are also alike in that their authors seem to be equally credible, as each provided detailed insight on their subjects as well as numerous sources to back up their claims. Both articles also left the possibility of further research. For the first, new trials can further test SenseCam's effectiveness as an anterograde amnesia rehabilitation tool; while for the second, additional experiments can test for glucocorticoids as a main cause of the psychogenic anterograde amnesia. Perhaps one of the key differences between the articles is the contrasting audiences they were intended for and how it affected their content. Since the author of the first article wrote for the general audience, she had to include definitions and descriptions to clarify words that might confuse an ordinary reader. The other author was able to assume that he was writing to an audience of scientists, so his writing was much more abrupt and to-the-point. Another difference between the articles is their purposes for being written. The purpose of the first was to describe a possible treatment for anterograde

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amnesia, while that of the second was to merely inform the scientific community of a specific type of the condition. Works Cited Katalin Pauly-Takacs, Chris J. A. Moulin, Edward J. Estlin. " SenseCam as a rehabilitation tool in a child with anterograde amnesia. " *Memory*. Vol. 19, Iss. 7. 10/01/11 Kumar, S., Rao, S. L., Sunny, B. and Gangadhar, B. N. (2007), " Widespread cognitive impairment in psychogenic anterograde amnesia. " *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, 61: 583—586. doi: 10. 1111/j. 1440-1819. 2007. 01735. x