



STUDY TO DETERMINE FACTORS CONSIDERED BY SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPISTS IN DECISION MAKING FOR ORAL VERSUS NON-ORAL FEEDING IN, ACUTE POST STROKE PATIENTS

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Abstract

Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) mainly focus on providing the safest effective feeding programme to patients with dysphagia. There have been no research studies regarding SLTs' common practices in decision making for oral and non-oral feeding in the Sri Lankan context. The aims were to identify assessment methods, challenges and assessment related findings that are predominantly considered by SLTs when deciding between oral and non-oral feeding methods for acute post stroke patients. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. A purposive sampling method was used for recruiting 30 SLTs who provide dysphagia services in a government hospital setting. A mixed method was used to analyze the data (Statistic SPSS-22 Software for quantitative and thematic analysis for qualitative data analysis). The current study revealed that bedside assessment was used very often to decide the mode of nutritional intake by SLTs. To find the ten most important factors, participants were instructed to select 10 out of 48 factors. Based on frequency analysis and ranking, alertness (n=27), cough ability (n=24), history of pneumonia (n=22), ability to complete posture (n=21), oromotor control (n=21), silent aspiration (n=21), frequency of aspiration (n=15), secretion management (n=15), awareness (n=14) and nutritional status (n=13) were the most important ten factors considered by SLTs when deciding the mode of nutritional intake. Thematic analysis results indicated that "lack of caregiver support, lack of awareness of professional support, and lack of instrumental resource" were the challenges when SLTs make decisions on oral versus non-oral feeding. The current study explored most important 10 factors that are predominantly considered by Sri Lankan SLTs in decision making for oral versus non-oral feeding in, acute post-stroke patients. However, further studies are needed including a variety of clinical populations with dysphagia.

Keywords: Stroke, Speech and language therapists, oral feeding, Dysphagia