

A Comparison of Neuro Muscular Electrical Stimulation (NMES) Plus Traditional Therapy, versus Traditional Therapy in Patients with Longstanding Dysphagia

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Abstract

Background: Dysphagia in adults arises from a range of aetiologies including acquired neurological disorders and some cancers. Treatment using Neuro Muscular Electrical Stimulation (NMES) for dysphagia has been available in the USA for the last 14 years. In 2014 NICE guidelines were produced to enable UK therapists to trial the use of NMES. Information is sought on two aspects of NMES therapy in a study population in the UK:

- its efficacy in treating dysphagia
- the incidence of non-serious adverse events (described under 'Safety', section 5, in the NICE guidelines)

Method: This feasibility study will recruit 20 adult patients with dysphagia. All will have previously received traditional swallowing therapy but have a limited Functional Oral Intake Scale (FOIS) of 4 or less. Each patient will be assessed prior to the study and at the end of treatment, using the FOIS, plus the SWAL-QOL and EAT-10 (quality of life scales). The total study period is 10 weeks comprising 5 weeks of traditional therapy alone (TT) followed by 5 weeks of NMES plus traditional therapy (NMES+TT). The NMES will be delivered using a device called Vital Stim three times each week for five weeks. Data will be analysed to determine if a combination of traditional therapy plus NMES produces a statistically significant improvement in swallowing function in the study population. In addition, data about any adverse events will be analysed. The study will be completed in December 2015 and our preliminary data will be presented.

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