

Swallowing Changes in People with Parkinson's in Saudi Arabia: Perceptions and Practices

Alhussain K^{1,2}, Pennington L^{1,2}, Brittain K^{1,2} and Miller N^{1,2}

¹King Fahad Medical City, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

²Newcastle University, Newcastle, UK

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to explore the experience of swallowing changes in people with Parkinson's (PwP) in Saudi Arabia and their impact on both PwP and their families.

Method: This is a qualitative study, using semi-structured interviews with 39 participants PwP and their carers and a focus group with three speech and language therapists (SLT). The interviews and focus group were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Result: The main themes categories that emerged are 'the whole meal is awkward', 'we all have Parkinson's' and 'I leave it all to Allah'. There was a close link between cultural context and how eating and drinking changes manifested and impacted on individuals and families. The influence of Islamic beliefs was apparent in both the PwP and the caregivers' interviews. It shaped how they dealt with the disease, how they interpreted symptoms and change, their views on rehabilitation and their willingness to discuss the impact of swallowing changes with the interviewer.

Conclusion: This study highlights how Saudi Arabian society has traditional mealtime customs for families and for older people in particular. An understanding of these socio-cultural factors is necessary to appreciate how the impact of eating and drinking changes in Saudi Arabia differs from impacts reported for other populations and the different implications this holds for rehabilitation of PwP. SLTs need to be aware of the cultural background of the person with Parkinson's when assessing their eating and drinking abilities. Considerations have to be made when recommending treatment plans or eating modifications.

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