

Dysphagia Gym: Do Dysphagia Groups Increase Therapy Intensity and Are They Effective in Improving Outcomes for Patients in the Acute Stroke Setting?

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Abstract

The Royal College of Physicians (RCP) estimated that 40% to 78% of patients will have dysphagia post stroke (2016). Forty five minutes of daily therapy per discipline is recommended in the acute stages of recovery (RCP, 2016 & NICE, 2013). Mid Cheshire foundation trust implemented group therapy assessing against national guidelines 1.2.16 and 1.2.17 (NICE, 2013). They found daily physiotherapy groups were effective in increasing physical activity and therapy intensity without extra demands on staff. Qualitative data highlighted an increase in patient motivation through shared experience. Although research has focused on the various principles of dysphagia rehabilitation, there is a paucity in the literature in how to deliver this. This project aims to evaluate: therapy intensity, knowledge of dysphagia and functional outcomes through 'dysphagia gym'. Dysphagia gym will run over 2 weeks, three 45 minute sessions per week. A questionnaire evaluating patients' perceptions of dysphagia and the therapy outcome measure (TOM) tool will be completed pre and post therapy. All patients must have an acute stroke diagnosis, dysphagia confirmed by instrumental assessment and a dysphagia rehabilitation program. Therapy intensity will be compared with retrospective data collated between January to March 2019. It is anticipated that group therapy will increase therapy intensity and patients' understanding of dysphagia. This should lead to greater levels of motivation, engagement and improvements on the TOM's. This projects proposes a novel and effective way of providing dysphagia treatment using current evidence based practice, whilst managing a demanding caseload.

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