

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS): Dysphagia assessment and nutritional aspects management

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Background: This research examines a number of patients with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), by evaluating the impact of specific dietary protocols in the malnutrition management. The study aims at verifying how the correct nutritional aspects management – through diet protocols and dysphagia assessment scales – can improve the nutrition and nutritional status of patients affected by this pathology, reducing the related complications and improving their life quality.

Materials and Methods: 11 patients diagnosed with ALS were examined and subjected to two different eating attitude screening tests (Eating Attitude Test 10; Northwestern Dysphagia Patient Check Sheet), which were repeated six months apart.

Results: The carried out evaluations showed an improvement (36% of the cases) in the history of recurrent pneumonia and in the frequency of feverish peaks. As regards the behavioural variables, improvements (36% of cases) in the awareness of dysphagia and in the management of salivary secretions have been observed. In 91% of cases there was a marked improvement in the delay of the pharyngeal reflex of swallowing.

Discussion: The results of the research, according to the scientific evidence of the sector, point out the importance of taking care of the nutritional status of patients in relation to their

life expectancy and quality and highlight the value of constant monitoring of swallowing abilities to prevent associated complications (e.g. malnutrition and/or dehydration).

Conclusion: A correct multidisciplinary management, which includes a constant assessment of swallowing and the use of specific dietary protocols, improves the nutrition of patients with ALS, reducing the risk of complications development (e.g. malnutrition, aspiration during the meal) and improving the life quality of the patient.

Key-words: Dysphagia, Speech therapy, Malnutrition, ALS.

Speaker Biography

Luigi Umberto Collova is an Italian speech therapist who supported many patients dealing with dysphagia, dysarthria and dysphonia in Healthcare Home-Services settled in the southern part of Italy (Palermo) during the most recent years. He graduated in MSc of Rehabilitation and Healthcare Professional Sciences at 25 years developing strong scientific and clinical experience in detecting bulbar symptoms due to neurological diseases (e.g. ALS, MS, PD) whether in treating them by specific patient centered counseling and specific therapeutic programs. He believes that the first prerequisite to convey an appropriate health-care dwells in active-listening and problem-solving strategies shared with patients and their families in order to embrace an empathic relationship. He actually collaborates with Reach-Aut s.r.l. in Vicenza (Italy) providing speech therapy services to American soldiers referred by Tricare, keeping his academic interests alive throughout professional practice and scientific research collaboration to join with.

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