

Neonatal Feeding and Swallowing Disorders (Neonatal Dysphagia)

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Abstract



One important concern that prolongs hospitalization in neonates is feeding and swallowing disorders - dysphagia. The incidence of feeding disorders and dysphagia is significant in preterm infants (26%) and is double that of the general population (13%). Dysphagia is widely prevalent (up to 90%) in patients with neurological disorders.

It is assumed that the incidence of feeding and swallowing disorders is increasing because of the improved survival rates of children with complex and medically fragile conditions and the improved longevity of persons with dysphagia that develops during childhood.

In the USA, an estimated 116,000 new-born infants are daily discharged from short-stay hospitals with a diagnosis of feeding and swallowing problems, according to the National Hospital Discharge Survey from the CDC (National Center for Health Statistics, 2010). Prevalence is estimated to be 30%–80% for children with developmental disorders.

Clinicians and parents are faced with long-term feeding and swallowing strategies in patients who are unsuccessful with oral feeds. Often, these decisions include exclusive chronic gavage feeding and more invasive and lifestyle-changing feeding methods such as gastrostomy placement. Neonatal feeding disorders are problems with a range of feeding activities that may or may not include problems with swallowing. Feeding disorders can be characterized by one or more of the following behaviours:

- Avoiding or restricting one's oral feeding intake.
- Displaying disruptive or inappropriate mealtime behaviours for developmental level.
- Experiencing less than optimal growth (Arvedson, 2008).

Neonatal dysphagia (dys = abnormal, phagia = swallowing), can occur in one or more of the four phases of swallowing and can result in aspiration—the passage of liquid, or saliva into the trachea—and retrograde flow of formula/breastmilk into the nasal cavity.

Neonatal feeding and swallowing disorders represent a major global problem, and consequences of dysfunctional feeding and swallowing patterns carry over into infancy and toddler age groups. Growth, development, and independent feeding and swallowing skills are all delayed among high-risk infants. Such a group comprises premature birth, low-birth-weight, congenital anomalies, structural abnormalities, perinatal asphyxia, postsurgical, neurological problems, metabolic disorders, genetic syndromes, GI disorder, and sepsis categories.



Biography

Sara holds a BSc of Speech Language Pathology from University of Málaga; College of Educations Sciences and Psychology - SPEECH PATHOLOGY - Málaga, Spain. She is a quadrilingual (Arabic, English, French, and Spanish) specialized Speech Language Pathologist at Danat Al Emarat, part of United Eastern Medical Services (UEMedical) Group. She is the Founder and Manager of the therapy services in the UE Medical. She is the founder and President of the Emirates SLP (Speech Language Pathologists) Society under the Emirates Medical Association. Furthermore, Sara is an American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA) international affiliate member. She is also a Dyphagia Committee member at the International Association of Logopedics and Phoniatrics (IALP).

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10th World Congress on Otolaryngology | June 22-23, 2020

Citation: Sara BaChar, Neonatal Feeding and Swallowing Disorders (Neonatal Dysphagia), Otolaryngology 2020, 10th World Congress on Otolaryngology, June 22-23, 2020, PP. 9