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Submitting author: Miss Emily HO

Post title: Speech Therapist, TMH, NTWC

Clinical Safety Assessment on the Accuracy of Thickened Liquid Consistencies
Prepared by Speech Therapists of NTWC

Ho NS, Ling CK, Ip KM, Tang NY, Lam MK

Department of Speech Therapy, NTWC

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Introduction

Dysphagia refers to the problems with swallowing process. Modification on food texture and liquid consistency is a common management. Hand thickened fluid was commonly used by speech therapist during bedside and instrumental swallowing assessment. Accurate preparation of different thickened liquid consistencies is crucial in dysphagia management.

Objectives

A clinical safety assessment on the accuracy of thickened liquid consistencies was launched in NTWC Speech Therapy Department in May 2017.

Methodology

Syringe flow test was used as the measuring tools in the clinical safety assessment. Objective data and subjective parameter of each fluid consistency was found under repeated measurements and consensus was made among all speech therapy working sites in NTWC, including TMH, TMHRB & POH. All NTWC speech therapists were recruited in the assessment and invited to prepare different liquid consistencies. Accuracy level of each fluid consistency was found. One week self-training was suggested to the speech therapists on the failed consistency. A second assessment was arranged if the speech therapist failed in the first assessment.

Result

Speech therapist in NTWC achieved 100% accuracy in preparing the medium thick liquid and extra thick liquid consistency while achieved 72.2 % accuracy and 86.1% accuracy for slightly thick liquid and mildly thick liquid respectively. Speech therapists have undergone around one week self-training on preparing the failed fluid consistency. 100% accuracy was achieved in both slightly thick liquid and mildly thick liquid consistency in the second assessment.

The accuracy in preparing thickened fluid by NTWC speech therapists is fair to high. The variability in liquid consistency can be attributed to both human errors and the

inherent variability of thickened liquid prepared by starch-based thickener. It is suggested that continual education and assessment to ward staff on preparing thickened liquid with this developed tools is necessary. Also, the usage of thickener of other nature, gum-based thickener that showed better stability across time can be considered in future practice.