The impacts of dysphagia and its assessment on head and neck cancer patients: a systematic review

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Introduction

- Dysphagia is the most common symptom in head and neck cancer patients due to multiple active cancer treatment.
- Although dysphagia could be examined by intrusive scope, the examination is not routinely and limited to understand how patients perceive dysphagia and its impact.

Objectives

The purposes of the study were:

- To understand the impacts of dysphagia on HNC patients;
- To identify the available dysphagia questionnaires for HNC patients.

Method

- Five electronic databases were systematically searched.
- Studies investigating dysphagia in HNC patients and published between 1995 and 2016 were included.
- Psychometric studies were including if they measured dysphagia in HNC patients but excluding the medical examination or treatment.

Results

- 26 original studies were included; most of them were cross-sectional and longitudinal quantitative studies, and mere studies were intervention studies.
- Most dysphagia research reported the association with emotional function, social eating, physical function and global QOL.
- There were 4 swallowing difficulties specific questionnaires, and 8 questionnaires containing swallowing items for HNC patients.

Table. The specific questionnaires on dysphagia for HNC patients

Questionnaire	Items	Content/Scoring	Rater
Swallowing Questionnaire QoL	SWAL-QOL (14)	• Content: SWAL-QOL: 16 domains: food selection, eating duration, eating desire, fear, burden, mental health, social functioning, communication, sleep, fatigue	Patient
	SWAL-CARE (15)	• Content: SWAL-CARE: 3 domains: clinical information, general advice, patient satisfaction	
		• Scoring: total scoring from 0-100	
MD Anderson Dysphagia Inventory (MDADI)	20	• Content: Global QoL and 3 subscales: emotional, functional, physical	Patient/Clinician
The Sydney Swallow Questionnaire (SSQ)	17	• Scoring: each item rating scale 1-5, total score from 0-100	
		• Content: overall swallowing function (1), direct physiological swallow functions (15), swallowing-related QoL (1)	Patient
Med cal outcomes of dysphagia (MADO)	22	• Scoring: each item: 100mm VAS (no problem-unable to swallow), total score from 0-1000	Patient/Clinician
		• Content: 3 domains: pulmonary, nutrition, psychological domains	Caregiver

Conclusions

- Many factors contribute to swallowing related QoL, so routine and long term swallowing assessment should be provided.
- The study suggested adopting the validated swallowing-specific questionnaires that give more information about swallowing.
- Patients should be coached and advised to continue oral intake and implementation of swallow rehabilitation by a multidiscipline team.

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