DYSPHAGIA IN CANCER PATIENTS: COMMON, DANGEROUS, UNDER-DIAGNOSED

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INTRODUCTION

- Dysphagia associated with:
 - Aspiration pneumonia
 - Increased mortality
 - Malnutrition
 - Reduced quality of life
- Dysphagia prevalence unknown in mixed solid tumours

OBJECTIVES

- Examine dysphagia prevalence across cancer trajectory
- Identify dysphagia predictors
- Measure impact on:
 - Eating and drinking
 - Quality of life (QoL)

METHODOLOGY

- 385 participants by consecutive sampling from:
 - Settings: Acute hospital, hospice
 - Teams: Medical oncology, radiation oncology, supportive care
 - In-patients, out-patients, oncology day ward, day hospice
- Dysphagia screened by:
 - Eating Assessment Tool¹
 - Empirical Questionnaire
- Dysphagia evaluated by:
 - Cranial nerve exam
 - Mann Assessment of Swallowing Ability²
 - Oral Health Assessment Tool³
 - Structured qualitative interview

Included
Adults (18+)
Confirmed solid tumour diagnosis
Understands, speaks English

Excluded
Unsuitable per referrer
Haematopoietic cancer
Head, neck, upper GI cancer

RESULTS

Dysphagia Prevalence

- Dysphagia undiagnosed prior to screening: 88%
- Needed management to prevent adverse effects: 71%
- Participants reported:
 - Dry mouth a major contributory factor
 - Fear of eating, drinking, swallowing

Dysphagia Predictors (univariate logistic regression)		
	p	Odds Ratio
Cognitive impairment	0.03	2.46
Dyspnoea	0.003	2.2
Hospice Care	0.002	2.57
More comorbidities	0.001	1.2
Supportive Care	0.004	2.27
Worse ECOG-PS	<0.001	-
Worse QoL	0.002	-

CONCLUSIONS

- Undiagnosed dysphagia prevalent
- Linked with decline in cognition, functional status, QoL
- High-impact symptom per participants
- All patients should be screened and managed appropriately

¹Belafsky et al. (2010) 'Validity and reliability of the Eating Assessment Tool (EAT-10)', *Ann Otol Rhinol, Laryngol*, 117(12):919-24

²Mann (2002) *MASA: The Mann Assessment of Swallowing Ability*, Singular/Thomson Learning, New York

³Chalmers et al. (2005) 'The oral health assessment tool – validity and reliability', *Aust Dent J*, 50(3):191-9