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CFAHR Evidence Brief

Implementation of a speech-language therapy-led referring model for VFSS: An evaluation of service outcomes.

Authors and Affiliations

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Alignment with *Metro South Health Research Strategy* 2019 - 2024

☒ Build research capability

☒ Increase research capacity

☒ Embed research in clinical services

☒ Translate research to better health

☒ Research excellence

Alignment with *Allied Health Research Capability & Development Strategy* 2021 - 2025

☐ Engage staff as research consumers

☒ Enable staff as research generators

☐ Build research-enabling infrastructure and strategic processes

☒ Strengthen leadership in research and innovation

☒ Enhance internal research collaboration and synergy

☒ Strengthen partnerships with consumers and external stakeholders

Alignment with *Allied Health Research Capability & Development Strategy* 2021 - 2025

☒ Standard 1 – Clinical Governance

☐ Standard 2 – Partnering with consumers

☐ Standard 3 – Preventing and controlling healthcare-associated infection

☐ Standard 4 – Medication safety

☒ Standard 5 – Comprehensive care

☐ Standard 6 – Communicating for safety

☐ Standard 7 – Blood management

☐ Standard 8 – Recognising and responding to acute deterioration

Practice Issues

Videofluoroscopic swallow studies (VFSS) are integral to diagnosing and supporting dysphagia management. However, in many countries, only doctors are authorised to complete medical imaging request forms, in accordance with radiation safety regulations. This can impact workflow and timely access to VFSS. Expanded scope of practice (ESP) models of care exist, where speech pathologists (SPs) are authorised to complete VFSS request forms. However, formal evaluations of these ESP models are currently lacking.

Evidence

A SP-led VFSS inpatient referring model was implemented in a quaternary hospital and service outcomes examined. Findings revealed that VFSS request forms completed in the SP-led referring model had greater adherence to radiation safety standards compared to the standard referring model. Efficiency was similar across both models and there were no adverse events. Completing VFSS requests did not disrupt daily workflow for SPs and training was effective preparation for the role.

Further, implementation outcomes were evaluated, by examining stakeholder perceptions, using the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) to ascertain implementation barriers, facilitators and critical sustainability factors. Implementation facilitators were (1) the advantage of SP-led VFSS referring over the standard model (doctors referring), in promoting high-quality VFSS referrals; (2) compatibility of the model with the SP skill set; (3) supportive communication networks between staff groups; and (4) engaging stakeholders throughout implementation. Adequate availability of trained VFSS referring SPs was both a barrier and a facilitator of implementation. It was also a critical sustainability factor, along with ongoing staff education and outcome monitoring.

Practice Change

Results demonstrated that the SP-led VFSS referral model can be safely and appropriately implemented in the inpatient setting. Improved quality of information documented on request forms by SPs increases adherence with radiation safety standards, providing clearer justification for radiation assessments and potentially eliciting more targeted diagnostic information to inform dysphagia treatment planning. Planning and evaluating implementation processes and outcomes using a standardised implementation framework such as CFIR aided understanding of barriers and facilitators for introducing the SP-led VFSS referring model. These findings may support other hospital services to establish this type of referring model.

Publication/s

Taubert, S., Burns, C., Ward E.C. & Bassett, L. (Early Online 2022). Evaluation of the implementation of a speech-language therapy-led referring model for VFSS using the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR). International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders. https://doi.org/10.1111/1460-6984.12733

Taubert, S., Burns, C., Ward E.C. & Bassett, L. (2022). Implementation of a speech and language therapy-led referring model for videofluroscopic swallow studies: An evaluation of service outcomes. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*. 57(3), 512-523. https://doi.org/10.1111/1460-6984.12700

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Metro South Health Research Strategy 2019 – 2024 https://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/2325000/research-strategy.pdf
Allied Health Research Capability & Development Strategy 2021 – 2025 https://metrosouth.health.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/allied-health-research-strategy.pdf
National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/sites/default/files/migrated/Overview-of-the-NSQHS-Standards-second-edition.pdf