

CFAHR Evidence Brief

Speech Pathology dysphagia management practice in Australian Emergency Departments

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 2017 - 2020](#)

- 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 2017 - 2020](#)

- 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 Issue

Early detection of dysphagia by speech pathology (SP) services has been shown to reduce the risk of associated medical complications and subsequent economic cost of dysphagia. As a significant percentage of patients admitted to acute care services generally first present via the emergency department (ED), timely speech pathology (SP) involvement at this initial admission point may improve provision of initial dysphagia services and early management. However, despite the documented benefits for the provision of early SP dysphagia services, the presence of SP services in the ED setting has been historically limited.

Evidence

Phase 1: A national survey of 68 Australian clinical services was undertaken to examine current nature and scope of SP practice in the ED with specific focus on dysphagia management. The survey identified that whilst most SP departments provide a service to the ED of their facility, nursing-led dysphagia screening model is the most commonly utilised clinical model in ED. There is strong focus on the stroke population which has been driven by organisation goals.

Phase 2: 12 clinicians participated in an in-depth follow-up interview to explore current service models in further detail, as well as barriers and facilitators to establishment and sustainability. Transcripts were analysed using thematic coding, with service characteristics mapped to the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) model. Key domains which contributed to establishment of the SP service included: evidence strength and quality, cost, networks and communications, leadership engagement and key stakeholders. Clinicians identified ongoing education for ED staff and established networks with the multidisciplinary team as factors which sustain their current SP service. In addition, clinicians identified improved funding/access to resources and improved referral/screening processes to help further develop SP service in the future.

Practice Change

Findings from this study have provided new evidence to better understand the current nature of SP dysphagia service models within Australian EDs. Further research into dysphagia risk identification across the total ED population is needed to determine the benefits of expanding dysphagia screening services beyond the stroke population. A subsequent study is currently underway at Logan Hospital evaluating the efficacy and implementation success of a shared care ED dysphagia screening model, with the ultimate aim to enhance the provision of early dysphagia care, and to optimise patient and service outcomes in the future.

Publication/s

Lal, P., Wishart, L. R., Ward, E. C., Schwarz, M., Seabrook, M., & Coccetti, A. (in prep). Understanding current speech pathology service provision in Australian Emergency Departments.

Adapted from Tilley Pain (Townsville HHS)

Based on the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association's Health Policy Evidence Brief

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 2017 – 2020 <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>