

ESO Supports Call for a Pan-European FEES-Certification Procedure

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BASEL, SWITZERLAND 30 March 2017 – In acute stroke, at least 50% [1] of patients are reported to suffer from dysphagia. Due to the complications of impaired deglutition, including malnutrition, dehydration and aspiration pneumonia, length of hospital stay is nearly doubled in affected patients and the long-term outcome is generally worse with higher level of dependency and need for institutional care compared to non-dysphagic stroke patients [2]. Furthermore, stroke-related mortality rises two-fold if dysphagia is present [3]. With regards to the additional burden to the healthcare system, post-stroke dysphagia significantly increases medical expenses with 1-year costs per patient being about \$4,510 higher than for a patient without dysphagia, even when controlling for age, comorbidities, and proportion of time alive [4].

Early aspiration screening is mandatory as first step within the precisely orchestrated diagnostic and therapeutic workup [5]. Subsequently, however, to get a more comprehensive picture of the specific pattern of swallowing impairment and to help fine tune necessary protective and rehabilitative strategies at the individual patient's level, instrumental assessment, and in particular Flexible Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing (FEES), may be employed [5]. Today, FEES is now probably the most frequently used tool for objective dysphagia assessment in many European countries. In general, FEES allows for an evaluation of the efficacy and safety of swallowing, determination of appropriate feeding strategies and assessment of the efficacy of different swallowing maneuvers [6].

Due to these circumstances, the ESO has decided to help providing training opportunities in this technique for both physicians and speech and language therapists involved in stroke care all across Europe. The ESO plans to build on the recent experience gained in Germany, where three medical societies (neurology, stroke and geriatrics) have endorsed an educational FEES-curriculum [7]. The ESO aims at working together with the European Academy of Neurology, the European Union Geriatric Medicine Society and the European Society for Swallowing Disorders in achieving the goal of a pan-European FEES-certification procedure.

References

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