The Royal Wolverhampton
NHS Trust

Role of the Speech and Language Therapist in Critical Care

Adult Speech and Language Therapy
Acute and Community AHPs

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- **Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available**
- **If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111**
- **Keep the environment clean and tidy**
- **Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.**

Introduction

This information is for anyone who would like to find out how speech and language therapists can support patients in critical care (sometimes called intensive care). You may be a patient or know someone who has had an admission to critical care.

What is a Speech and Language Therapist?

A Speech and Language Therapist is a healthcare professional who specialises in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of speech, language, communication and swallowing (dysphagia) difficulties. They work with individuals of all ages across various settings, including hospitals, schools, care homes, community clinics, and private practices, tailoring their care to each patient's needs.

What is the role of a Speech and Language Therapist working in Critical Care?

The team supports adults in the critical care setting who are experiencing speech, language, communication, and/or swallowing difficulties. They also support all patients who have a tracheostomy. Here are some examples of the conditions they work with:

- Post-extubation swallowing difficulties
- Respiratory illnesses (for example, pneumonia)
- Head injury
- Cardiac Arrest
- Stroke
- Progressive neurological conditions (for example, Parkinson's Disease, Motor Neuron Disease and Multiple Sclerosis)
- Head and neck cancer
- Post-surgical patients

How will the Speech and Language Therapist help me?

Speech and language therapists play a critical role in managing swallowing difficulties (dysphagia). This is how they can help:

- **Assess, diagnose and treat** swallowing problems to identify the cause and determine the best course of action
- **Recommend modified diets and/or liquids** to ensure swallowing is safe and reduce the risk of choking and/or aspiration
- **Provide safe feeding strategies** to help make swallowing safer and/or more comfortable
- **Collaborate with the multidisciplinary team,** offering support for positioning or nutrition with eating and drinking skills
- **Refer to other specialities** such as Dietetics, Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) or Gastroenterology for additional care or expertise
- **Arrange instrumental assessments**, like a Video Fluoroscopy (VFS) or Fibreoptic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing (FEES), when further analysis of swallowing is required. If a tracheostomy is in place, it is likely that FEES is used to assess the swallow prior to starting oral diet and/or fluid

Speech and language therapists are key in supporting communication difficulties. This is how they can help:

- **Assess, diagnose, and treat** communication difficulties, identifying specific areas of need such as speech, language, communication or social interaction challenges
- **Support understanding and expression,** helping patients to comprehend language and communicate their thoughts and needs effectively
- **Provide alternative communication methods,** such as alphabet charts, communication books or assistive devices
- **Help with voice restoration for patients that have tracheostomy,** by using a one-way valve when managing periods off the ventilator

- **Collaborate with the multidisciplinary team** to address communication challenges holistically, aligning care with the patient's overall treatment goals
- **Educate and involve the multidisciplinary team, families and carers,** equipping them with tools and techniques to support effective communication
- **Refer to other specialists,** such as Occupational Therapy

When will discharge from Speech and Language Therapy happen?

Some patients may no longer need the support of a speech and language therapist after leaving the hospital. However, for those with ongoing needs or goals related to speech, language, communication or swallowing, our team will refer to the local community speech and language therapy team for further support.

How do I get in touch?

Speech and Language Therapy Service
The Gem Centre
Neachells Lane
Wednesfield
Wolverhampton
WV11 3PG

Telephone: 01902 444363(Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm)

E-mail: rwh-tr.Speech-And-Language@nhs.net

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。

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