

St Luke's
HOME, CORK

Communication & Swallowing Difficulties in Dementia

The Role of the Speech & Language Therapist (SLT)

1 Eavan Fitzgerald
Senior Speech & Language Therapist
HSE/Private Practice

Living Well with Dementia Conference – Person Centred Approaches
April 23rd 2015

Eavan Fitzgerald - Senior SLT - Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

St Luke's
HOME, CORK

4 **For this to happen:**

- Adequate SLT staffing
- Equitable service nationally
- As a profession we need to promote our role
- Lack of service needs to be highlighted
- Multi-disciplinary team (MDT) working

person-centred care → relationship-centred care
(Nolan, 2004)

Eavan Fitzgerald - Senior SLT - Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

St Luke's
HOME, CORK

2 **Dementia causes:**

- Communication difficulty for the person with dementia
- Communication difficulty for carers
- Eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties

(RCSLT, 2014)

Eavan Fitzgerald - Senior SLT - Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

St Luke's
HOME, CORK

5 **Risks of not providing an SLT service:**

For the individual:

- Decreased QOL, wellbeing.
- Altered quality of relationships.
- Delay/incorrect diagnosis.
- Exclusion socially & in key decisions making.
- Avoidable death due to malnutrition, choking, aspiration pneumonia

(RCSLT, 2014)

Eavan Fitzgerald - Senior SLT - Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

St Luke's
HOME, CORK

3 **What can the SLT offer?**

Specialist training & knowledge to assess & manage these problems

- Language impairment may be an initial prominent feature – frontotemporal dementia (FTD), primary progressive aphasia (PPA)
- Patterns of communication change are associated with different types of dementia
- Adaptive management as the dementia progresses

Eavan Fitzgerald - Senior SLT - Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

St Luke's
HOME, CORK

6 **Risks of not providing an SLT service:**

For organisations:

- Unnecessary admission & readmission to hospital and care homes
- Ineffective behaviour management
- Needs of vulnerable adults not met
- Inequity of service provision

(RCSLT, 2014)

Eavan Fitzgerald - Senior SLT - Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

7

SLT Intervention - Communication

- Comprehensive assessment – nature, severity & impact
- Specific, personalised communication strategies & programmes
- Use of these in all environments
- Close working with and training of carers
- Disseminate information to all MDT members

Eileen Fitzgerald - Senior SLT Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

10

Ways to help expression:


- Encourage the person to communicate in whatever way is appropriate
- Aid control by reminding the person what they have said
- Encourage gesture
- Listen to the person's intonation
- Encourage the person to verbalise what they are doing
- Attend & listen even if you are not following the content (Enderby, 2008)

Eileen Fitzgerald - Senior SLT Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

8

Ways to help understanding:

- Reduce distracting stimuli
- Face the person, maintain eye contact
- Raise your voice slightly at the beginning of a conversation to get attention
- Slow down your rate of speaking
- Shorten your sentences, use simpler grammar, give information one piece at a time



(Enderby, 2008)

Eileen Fitzgerald - Senior SLT Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

11

Practice!

- It is not enough to just 'give' this advice.
- Role-play, group practice and clear examples are needed.

Eileen Fitzgerald - Senior SLT Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

9

Ways to help understanding:

- Use different ways of saying the same thing
- Try to avoid vague terms – 'he', 'she'
- Introduce topics and do not change too quickly
- Be realistic – judge a given situation
- Avoid open ended questions

(Enderby, 2008)

Eileen Fitzgerald - Senior SLT Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

12

Helpful tools:

- Communication passports & life stories:



Please read this booklet about me, and ways to communicate

Contents

1. Key things you need to know
2. Special People
3. My Family
4. My Friends
5. How I communicate
6. How you can help me with communication
7. Things I like to talk about
8. Places
9. My Work
10. My Hobbies
11. Special moments and events in my life
12. Things that cheer me up
13. Things that upset me
14. Things that make me angry
15. I need help with:
16. Food and Drink
17. My night

Can trigger a greater response. Can help you to get to know the person quicker. Ease carer concern regarding impact of shared history.


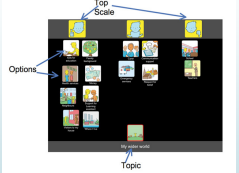
www.communicationpassports.org.uk

Eileen Fitzgerald - Senior SLT Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

13

Helpful tools:

Talking Mats:

Low tech communication aid using picture symbols placed on a textured mat.

www.talkingmats.com

Baron Fitzgerald - Senior SLT Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

16

SLT Intervention - Swallowing



- Comprehensive assessment – nature, severity & impact
- Assess aspiration and/or choking risk
- Make recommendations for management
- Close working with and training of carers
- Disseminate information to all MDT members
- Future planning

Baron Fitzgerald - Senior SLT Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015


14

Embracing technology!

- Apps for iPads and Tablets: Talking Mats, Memory Aids – to do lists, daily Schedules etc.

Youtube
Google

Baron Fitzgerald - Senior SLT Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

17

What is dysphagia?

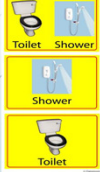
Dysphagia is the medical term for swallowing difficulties. It can lead to **Aspiration**: food and/or drinks enter the lungs instead of the stomach

We can see a complex presentation in people with dementia due to effects of cognition, behavioural issues as well physical changes in the swallow mechanism.

Baron Fitzgerald - Senior SLT Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

15

Consideration of signage



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Baron Fitzgerald - Senior SLT Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

18

Cognitive changes that impact on eating skills

- Memory disturbance – forgetting when ate, losing track
- Perceptual/spatial difficulties – locating & recognising utensils
- Apraxia – using utensils, voluntary oral movements
- Language – expressing preferences, following instructions
- Executive dysfunction – inappropriate behaviour, swallow safety awareness

(Kindell, 2002)

Baron Fitzgerald - Senior SLT Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

19

St Luke's
HOME, CORK

Additional issues that impact on eating skills

- Agitation – sitting, concentrating
- Aggression – refusal, not accepting of help, throwing
- Depression – poor appetite, slow eating
- Delusions – ideas about food and/or the server
- Hallucinations – visual distractions

(Kindell, 2002)

Baron Fitzgerald - Senior SLI Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

22

St Luke's
HOME, CORK

Practical management:

Consideration of cognitive, behavioural and physical issues is vital!

Getting ready for the meal:

- Vision – glasses, neglect
- Hearing
- Dentition
- Alertness
- Potential distractions

Baron Fitzgerald - Senior SLI Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015


20

St Luke's
HOME, CORK

Physical changes to swallow


Oral Preparatory Stage

- Poor bolus acceptance
- Labial spillage
- Difficulty chewing & forming a cohesive bolus



Oral Stage

- Difficulty controlling and propelling the bolus
- Premature spillage of fluids/food into pharynx
- Pocketing of food or residue after the swallow



Baron Fitzgerald - Senior SLI Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

23

St Luke's
HOME, CORK

Practical management:

During the meal:

- Ability to sit – prompting, extra helpings, finger foods
- Staying on task – prompting, minimise distractions
- Not participating – prompts, get started, copying
- Dealing with refusal – chart behaviour to manage
- Swallow safety awareness – bolus size, supervision
- Positioning
- Utensils
- Modify texture of liquids and diet as required

Baron Fitzgerald - Senior SLI Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015


21

St Luke's
HOME, CORK

Physical changes to swallow


Pharyngeal Stage

- Altered swallow trigger timing
- Nasal penetration
- Poor airway protection
- Penetration/Aspiration
- Pooling of residue



Oesophageal Stage

- Disordered peristalsis
- Regurgitation
- Reflux
- Vomiting



Baron Fitzgerald - Senior SLI Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

24

St Luke's
HOME, CORK

Helpful tools & initiatives:

Personalised placemats:



Assisted Dining:



Baron Fitzgerald - Senior SLI Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

25

St Luke's
HOME, CORK

Finally:

- The SLT profession need to continue to advocate for people with dementia and establish clear pathways for intervention to define our role.
- There should be access to SLT services for people with dementia at all stages, with equality nationally.
- Service providers should highlight the needs for these services within their setting especially if SLT input is unavailable or limited.

Early SLT intervention is crucial so that people with dementia and their carers have their needs met in a timely manner.

Evon Fitzgerald - Senior SLT Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

St Luke's
HOME, CORK

Thank you for your attention!

Questions?

26

Evon Fitzgerald - Senior SLT Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015

27

References

- Enderby P, in Stokes G., & Goudie F. (eds). (2008). The Essential Dementia Care Handbook. UK: Speechmark Publishing Ltd
- Kindell J. (2002). Feeding and Swallowing Disorders in Dementia. UK: Speechmark Publishing Ltd
- Nolan M. (2004) Beyond person-centred care: a new vision for gerontological nursing. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 13, 45-53
- Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists. (2014). Speech and Language Therapy Provision for People with Dementia - RCSLT Position Paper

Websites:
www.talkingmats.com
www.communicationpassports.org.uk

Evon Fitzgerald - Senior SLT Living Well with Dementia Conference April 2015