

## **Current Clinical Practice on Dysphagia Management in Sri Lankan Context: Speech - Language Therapists' Perspective**

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The field of speech language therapy is a relatively new, developing service in Sri Lanka. Since the establishment of the service, no researches have been conducted to identify Speech-Language Therapists' (SLT) perception of the practice on dysphagia management. The objectives of the study were to identify training and current clinical practice on dysphagia management, to describe the challenges faced by the SLTs when managing dysphagic clients and to describe the coping strategies used by SLTs to overcome the challenges they faced when managing dysphagic clients. A descriptive cross-sectional study design was implemented. All SLTs who were practicing in Sri Lanka were included. A semi-structured, self-administrative questionnaire that included both qualitative and quantitative components was used. Among 44, 86%, (n=38) of SLTs saw clients with dysphagia in their caseload. Thirty-two (32) SLTs saw adults, 28 SLTs saw paediatrics and only seven (7) SLTs saw neonates with dysphagia. Assessing neonates was the most significantly challenging area. Lack of clinical exposure, limited recognition of SLT service among medical professionals and lack of awareness among clients and families on the gravity of the problems associated with dysphagia were also identified as significant challenges. Only 47.5%% (n=18) SLTs had participated in CPDs to improve their skills relevant to dysphagia and 13.88% (n=5) liaised with overseas SLTs. Adding a section or module for neonatal dysphagia management in the academic curriculum, developing a recognized body to conduct training to enhance the SLTs' skills and knowledge, establishing a formal framework to gain internationally required clinical norms of practicing in Sri Lanka, continuing awareness programs with relevant professionals for the benefit of the society and continuing further researches on the particular area were recommended.