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Identifying Dysphagia Risks in People with a Learning Disability in the Community: A Speech & Language Therapy Service Evaluation

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Introduction

Adults with Learning Disabilities and dysphagia have an increased risk of premature death^{1,2}

Little is known of how SLT services for people with Learning Disabilities and dysphagia is, or should be, delivered

The trust initiated an Annual Dysphagia Telephone Triage service providing a phone call to all people with Learning Disabilities with a dysphagia care plan

Purpose

Evaluate:

Annual Dysphagia Telephone Triage (ADTT) service (2016-18)

Determine impact of no ADTT service due to:

Staff shortages (2019)
Covid-19 pandemic (2020-21)

Methods

Service evaluation:

Clinical notes review (2016-21)

Data:

Patient demographics:
e.g., age, gender, diagnoses,
learning disability severity,
co-morbidities

ADTT service provision:

e.g., people contacted

Outcomes:

e.g., hospital admissions

Local Trust approved & City,
University of London ethics
committee registered

References

1. Heslop, P. et al. 2013. Confidential Inquiry into premature deaths of people with learning disabilities.

2. Perez, C.M. et al. 2015. The incidence of healthcare use, ill health and mortality in adults with intellectual disabilities and mealtime support needs. *J. of Int. Dis. Research*, 59(7), pp.638-652.

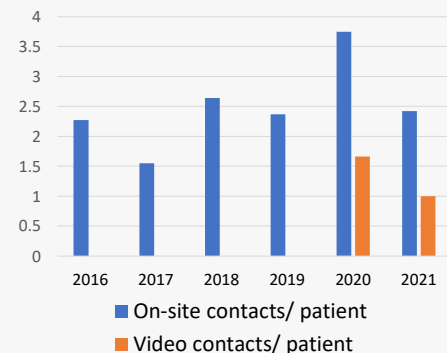
Results

N = 33 patients
Mean age 50 years
(18-92 years)

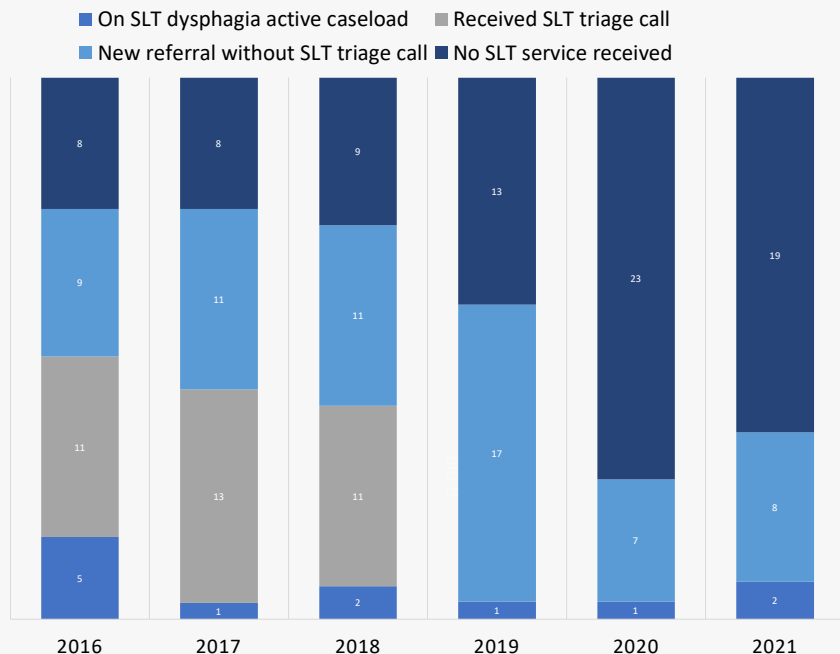
76% = Severe-Profound
Learning Disabilities

2.9 co-occurring
medical conditions/
person (mean)

Average number of SLT contacts per patient



SLT INPUT BY YEAR FOR EACH PERSON WITH A DYSPHAGIA CARE PLAN



Conclusions

The telephone triage service:

- Identified more at risk than re-referrals alone
- However, it did not reach all patients
- The pandemic impacted the ability to evaluate the service fully
- Introducing video calls did not reduce on-site contacts