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EACD format:

Accessible Speech & Language Therapy Eating and Drinking Guidelines for children with dysphagia – A qualitative analysis of UK documentation

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Introduction

Accessible eating and drinking guidelines or mealtime mats have been recommended to support carers' adherence to mealtime recommendations for children with childhood-onset disabilities who have eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties (dysphagia).

Participants and methods

This ethically approved observational study requested UK Speech & Language Therapist (SLT) participants (n=102) to upload documentation used to provide dysphagia guidelines, via one question within a larger clinical practice survey (open summer 2021). Uploaded documents were screened, with duplicates removed, and analysed using content analysis.

Results

Participants (n=37, n=36 female, n=35 White/White British) provided n=59 documents with n=39 determined as mealtime mats (n=10 provided by n=3 participants, n=32). The 32 mats had 19 different titles e.g. Eating & Drinking/Mealtime Guidelines/Information/Plan. These mats varied in format (n=18 landscape, n=26 colour, n=28 in sections), approach (n=23 third person language, n=18 used colour-coded risk level) and content (n=20 provided SLT contact details). The most common recommendation topics were 'Food' n=32, 'Drink' n=32, 'Position' n=29, Utensils n=25. Subheading terms differed but were grouped including Position(ing) n=29, Risk/What to look out for n=27, Food/Drink (texture) n=31 (n=30 using IDDSI terminology). Other recommendation subheadings were less common, Communication n=15, or unique.

Conclusion

This is the first study to explore the format of UK SLT mealtime mats. The mats were heterogeneous in name, format, approach and content. Some common features were identified. This wide variety is likely to make transition across settings/locations difficult for carers and children, and will impact the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of these documents.