

THE JOURNAL OF THE IRISH HEAD AND NECK SOCIETY

Title: The use of Speech and Language Therapy-specific outcome measures in a new weekly multi-disciplinary on-treatment clinic for people undergoing radiotherapy for head and neck cancer – a 6-month experience

Body: Background:

A new on-treatment clinic commenced in August 2024 for people undergoing radiotherapy for head and neck cancer. A specialist Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) was recruited to support people at risk of developing speech, swallowing, voice and mouth opening difficulties as a result of treatment. SLT-specific outcome measures, clinician and patient reported, are used as standard of care, to identify and manage treatment related side effects.

Methods:

A retrospective review was conducted of electronic health records (EHR) of people seen by SLT in the on-treatment clinic in the first 6 months.

Results:

Over 6 months, 30 patients were seen by SLT weekly during treatment and at week two post-treatment review. SLT-specific outcome measures were utilised at key timepoints, namely; MIO, PSS-HN, MDADI, EAT-10, IDDSI Functional Diet Scale, GRBAS, VHI-10 and 100ml WST. Work has commenced on integrating SLT-specific outcome measure tools into the EHR platform.

Conclusion:

The use of outcome measures establishes functional baseline, including nature and effect of tumour burden symptoms, and deficits from treatment to date, such as surgery. This informs education on likely treatment effects and appropriate prehabilitation and prophylactic exercise programmes. Change captured during and early post-treatment completion guides management and rehabilitation needs, thus improving care.

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