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Title: Enhancing Dysphonia and Dysphagia Management: Lessons from the First Year of a SLT led Modernised Care Pathway (MCP)

Body: Background: The Dysphonia/Dysphagia MCP is funded via Slainte Care HSE with the main aim of reducing ENT waiting lists across the country. The aim of the Dysphonia/Dysphagia MCP is to triage patients of all ages who experience dysphonia +/- dysphagia +/- globus with no red flags (indicative of requirement to see an ENT consultant) directly to a specialised Speech & Language Therapy service. This is a proven concept that has been successfully piloted in the UK (Carding, 2003)(Seabrook et al., 2017) which revealed that 81.3% of patients were able to be managed without ENT specialist intervention, with significant reductions to the ENT wait times.

Objective: To assess the efficiency of the MCP for managing Dysphonia and Dysphagia patients during a set-up year at the Mater Hospital.

Methods: A retrospective review of all referrals made to the Dysphonia/Dysphagia MCP in 2024 was completed. The outcome of the appointments was recorded, specifically whether the SLT led appointment enabled the patient to be discharged from ENT services.

Results: There were 51 referrals in total to the SLT led pathway in 2024. 76% of these patients were able to be discharged following a SLT led appointment. This finding supports the effectiveness of the pathway and the further development of the service.

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