

## THE JOURNAL OF THE IRISH HEAD AND NECK SOCIETY

**Title:** The cross-site Speech and Language Therapy management of people undergoing radiotherapy for head and neck cancer in Cork, Ireland – a service evaluation

**Body:** Background:

Head and neck cancer (HNC) and treatment modalities such as radiotherapy can cause speech, voice and swallowing difficulties. The Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) is a key member of the multi-disciplinary team (MDT) to assess and manage these difficulties to optimise functional outcomes. In Cork, Ireland, HNC is managed in the South Infirmity-Victoria University Hospital (SIVUH) with radiotherapy treatment delivered in Cork University Hospital (CUH) and the Bon Secours Hospital, necessitating cross-site MDT working.

Methods:

The cross-site SLT teams conducted a service evaluation by reviewing current practices of service delivery, activity data and medical records, to assess effectiveness, quality and outcomes of the radiotherapy intervention pathway.

Results:

The 3 treatment sites have dedicated, specialist SLT teams so intervention occurs before, during and after treatment. Baseline assessment, education with preventative exercises, weekly on treatment assessment and symptom management and post-treatment rehabilitation occurs. Cross-site SLT collaboration is ongoing to standardise intervention and ensure robust communication and reporting to optimise intervention for people having radiotherapy. A service user experience survey is planned.

Conclusion:

It is essential that people undergoing radiotherapy for HNC have access to SLT at all stages of treatment. Collaboration of cross-site SLT teams is integral to delivering optimal person-centred care.

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