

Evaluation of a Training Module for Speech and Language Therapists in Head and Neck Oncology

Susan Lawson¹, Kate Bree², Stacey Daly², Roisin Dunne², Katie Higgins¹, Deirdre Leavy², Abbi McCarron², SORCHA McManus²

1. Dept. of Speech and Language Therapy, St Luke's Radiation Oncology Network, Dublin, 2. Dept. of Speech and Language Therapy, St James's Hospital, Dublin

Background:

The incidence of head and neck cancer (HNHC) is rising. Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) are core members of HNC multidisciplinary teams (MDT) providing integral specialised services to this client group across their treatment journey. A service evaluation identified gaps in clinician knowledge and experience managing this client group. This study reports on an evaluation of a 1-day foundation level module for SLTs in HNC.

Methods:

SLTs from St Luke's Hospital and St James's Hospital, Dublin designed and delivered a face-to-face foundation module. Speakers included specialist SLTs, MDT members and patient representatives. Topics included surgical interventions, radiation-oncology, stages of rehabilitation, acute side-effects management, psycho-oncological aspects and patient journey. Attendees were asked to evaluate the training via a bespoke feedback form. Responses were collated and analysed qualitatively and quantitatively.

Results:

39/45 attendees submitted feedback. Attendee demographic was collated. Responses pertaining to learning goals, knowledge base, barriers to confidence and plans for implementation were analysed and identified.

Conclusion:

The requirement for SLT HNC tailored training programmes was identified. Findings from this training revealed positive learning outcomes, with SLTs motivated to develop their knowledge-base. Barriers and also potential solutions to advancement of skills in clinical-practice were identified. These findings will be used in the development of future training modules.