

Quality of Life in Head and Neck Cancer patients receiving home enteral nutrition at the South Infirmiry Victoria University Hospital

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Background:

Quality of life (QOL) is used to describe satisfaction in daily life and overall well-being. Home enteral nutrition (HEN) is an essential intervention for many patients with head and neck cancer (HNC) but can impact QOL.

Methods:

Data collection occurred in February 2023 from patients on HEN. The QOL questionnaire EORTC-QLQ-C30 was used. To gather qualitative data we also asked how a feeding tube has impacted QOL.

Results:

Forty patients were included with a response rate of 57.5%. Overall, QOL average score was 53.6. Social and role functioning were lowest in the functioning scales at 54.4 and 55.2. Symptom burden was highest for fatigue at 42 and lowest for nausea and vomiting at 7.9. Qualitative responses on the impact of feeding tube themes included "without it I would not be alive today", "the joy of eating is no longer felt", "I cannot leave the house much".

Conclusion:

These results show that QOL in HNC patients with a feeding tube is relatively low at 53.6. This cannot be directly correlated with a feeding tube presence, however does play a factor. Symptom burden varied significantly. Qualitatively, most patients found the feeding tube life changing and limiting in doing their normal activities. This highlights the importance of considering survivorship for these HNC patients longer term.