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Fall 4-1-2020

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Neonatal dysphagia: A case-based survey of speech language pathologist's practice pattern in India

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ABSTRACT

Background:

An estimated 15 million babies are born prematurely around the world, and India has the highest rate of preterm births (prematurity) globally, with about 3.6 million babies born preterm annually (WHO, 2012). Prematurity is a truly global problem because of associated neonatal (first 28 days of life) mortality and short- and long-term morbidity, and disability in later life.

Methods:

A total of 35 individuals were included in the survey. An electronic questionnaire consisting of two main sections was circulated to the participants through Microsoft Forms. The first section had questions on demographic details. The second section of the survey consisted of two hypothetical clinical case scenarios, which were developed by the authors of the study, along with practicing clinicians working in the NICU. These hypothetical clinical cases were created in such a way that they included considerations of assessment and management of feeding and swallowing disorders in the NICU.

Results:

22 Speech Language Pathologists completed the survey (4 experts and 18 practicing clinicians). The results revealed that the practice patterns for assessment and treatment of neonatal dysphagia within and between groups vary widely.

Conclusion:

Research is needed to determine the education and training needs of SLP graduate students to achieve proficiency with neonatal dysphagia. Additionally, research to determine needed supports for clinicians currently serving infants/neonates is also warranted.