

Original Article

# The Importance of the Speech Therapist's Performance in Cancer Hospital in the Treatment of Dysphagia in Head and Neck Cancer: A Bibliographic Review

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**Abstract** - *The speech therapist is the professional qualified to evaluate and rehabilitate speech, hearing, speech, swallowing, and orofacial motor disorders arising from the treatment of cancer. It is up to the specialist speech therapist to know how to evaluate, diagnose and identify the moment of intervention for the assistance of these patients. Objective: To describe the Importance of the speech therapist's performance in an oncology hospital for treating dysphagia in patients with head and neck cancer. Method: The study in question is a bibliographical review, where a survey was carried out in the literature available in conventional and virtual libraries. Discussion and Results: Early identification of dysphagia in patients with head and neck cancer results in adequate stimulation, avoiding bronchoaspiration and malnutrition, and improving the functionality of the structures responsible for swallowing. Conclusion: Due to the scarcity of literature, there was a need to carry out scientific research on the Importance of the speech therapist's treatment of dysphagia in head and neck cancer.*

**Keywords** - *Oncology, Dysphagia, Speech therapy, Bronchoaspiration, and Malnutrition.*

## 1. Introduction

Cancer or tumor is a mass constituted by the disorganized multiplication of atypical cells of a tissue, that is, without the known structure (Gielow, I. Oropharyngeal dysphagia).<sup>3</sup> In recent decades, it has been considered one of the most unpredictable and feared diseases; it can be acquired congenitally.

The main treatment modalities for head and neck cancer are surgery, radiotherapy, and chemotherapy, alone or in combination. The doctor defines the choice of treatment. The multidisciplinary team involved with the patient always considers the possibilities of preserving speech, voice, chewing, and swallowing mechanisms. The speech therapist is the professional responsible for the rehabilitation of these functions.

The head and neck area has been highlighted in speech therapy due to its Importance in treating cancer patients. In these cases, the speech therapist faces anatomorphophysiological changes that can lead to dysphagia.

Dysphagia is a symptom of a disease and can be caused in patients with head and neck cancer, whether they are undergoing treatment or postoperatively; and may compromise one or more phases of swallowing and the nutritional and pulmonary conditions of this patient, leading to a series of limitations that will impair their quality of life.

Assessment and speech therapy are necessary to assess whether there is a possibility of reintroducing the oral diet and the moment for tube removal. Therefore, during the transition period from tube feeding to oral feeding, the patient receives stimulation of swallowing in daily sessions, aiming to restore the functioning of the structures involved.

Thus, in this work, we will theoretically cite aspects related to head and neck cancer, such as etiology, incidence, symptoms, prevention and treatment, and the Importance of the speech therapist in the multidisciplinary team of professionals involved.

This research is justified by the growth of patients with head and neck cancer who acquire dysphagia during their treatment or in the post-surgical period because of the Importance of the work of a speech therapist in conjunction with other professionals for the treatment of this type of condition. Patients due to the sequelae caused by their treatments and surgeries.

## 2. Objective

Recognize the Importance of the speech therapist's role in an oncology hospital through the evaluation of therapy in dysphagia patients with head and neck cancer.



### 3. Materials and Methods

The study in question is a qualitative approach, adopting the bibliographic review in virtual databases. According to ABNT (2012): “Reference is a set of elements that allows the identification, in whole or in part, of printed or recorded documents in different types of materials, audiovisual, sound, electronic, among others.”

To survey the articles, an online search was carried out in the Virtual Health Library (BVS), Scientific Electronic Library Online (SCIELO), and National Library of Medicine (NCBI - PUBMED), covering the period from 2005 to 2018, using the following descriptors of health (Decs): oncology, dysphagia, speech therapy.

The inclusion criteria were texts in Portuguese and available in full. The exclusion criteria were articles that escaped the theme.

### 4. Results and Discussion

Thirty-five articles were found, and an exploratory reading of them was carried out, of which twenty-eight were excluded for characterizing an escape from the theme. The articles included were submitted to analytical reading to fill in a table specifically built for better analysis, including title, author, the main subject, and the year of publication of each article. Seven articles will be used for this research, as described in the table.

**Table 1. Distribution of 07 Brazilian articles on the Importance of the speech therapist's role in treating head and neck cancer. Manaus / AM, 2018.**

Title	Author	Main subject	Year
The Importance of the speech therapist's role in dysphagia in adult patients in the intensive care unit.	Matos, G. M.; Silva, L. C. O.;	Importance of hospital speech therapy.	2015
Performance of speech therapy in an intensive care unit of an infectious disease hospital in Alagoas	Silva, D. R.; Lira, F. Q.; Oliveira, J. C. C.; Canuto, M. S. B.;	Importance of speech therapist performance.	2015
Hospital Speech Therapy	Leite, I. C. G.; Simões, A. G.; Clemente, M. C. K.; Martins, L. S.; Bittar, A.S.; Bittar, C. L.; omem, J. A. de S.;	Hospital speech therapy	2005
The intervention of speech therapists in the sequelae of head and neck tumor surgeries.	Monteiro, E.	Head and neck tumors.	2017
Voice, swallowing, and quality of life of patients with mobility alteration from unilateral vocal irrigation before and after speech therapy.	Mangilli, L. D.; Amoroso, M. R. M.; Nishimoto, I. N.; Barroso, A. P. B.; Carrara-de-Angelism E.;	Contributions of speech therapy in dysphagia and patient's quality of life.	2008
Speech therapy performance during radiotherapy in patients with head and neck cancer.	Santos, C. P.;	The role of the speech therapist during radiotherapy in patients with head and neck cancer.	2015
Characterization of the population with oral and oropharyngeal cancer treated in the head and neck sector of a referral hospital in the city of Salvador-BA.	Silva, P. S. L; Leão, V. M. L.;; Scarpel, R. D.;	The role of the speech therapist in the treatment and pre and postoperative period of patients with head and neck cancer.	2018

### 5. Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it was possible to observe the need for a professional speech therapist in a multidisciplinary team to treat cancer in the head and neck region. Because the effectiveness of speech therapy has

been bringing good results in improving patients' quality of life, further studies and investigations are still necessary on the Importance of a good speech therapy evaluation before, during, and after the individual's treatment.

The effectiveness of speech therapy depends on several factors such as the patient's state, a good assessment, good monitoring, good nutritional status, and the therapeutic plan. In addition, food should be reintroduced orally to the patient, avoiding the risk of bronchoaspiration and malnutrition and having important family support for the individual.

It is important to point out that each patient will have speech therapy according to their needs and always be seen as unique. Further studies and research are still needed to raise awareness of the Importance of speech therapy and a speech therapist's intervention in treating an oncological patient, preventing and treating dysphagia and irreversible damage to the individual.

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