Assessment and treatment of orofacial weakness: Implications for dysphagia and dysarthria

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Abstract:
It is often assumed that weakness in the orofacial muscles can affect speech in patients with dysarthria, and that tongue weakness can contribute to oropharyngeal dysphagia. This is the basis for the use of oral-motor exercises by speech-language pathologists. However, there is little support for these associations in the literature. To address this discrepancy, we first need reliable and valid tools to assess orofacial strength. This presentation will examine current and innovative techniques for the subjective and objective assessment of orofacial strength. In addition, we will discuss theoretical principles for muscle training and how these may or may not apply to the orofacial system. Limited evidence is emerging for treating orofacial weakness in patients with dysphagia but not dysarthria. Continued research is needed to address the wide gap between research evidence and clinical practice.

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(Chair: Dr Karen Chan)

About the speaker:
Nancy is a Senior Research Speech-Language Pathologist at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, a US military treatment facility located in the Washington, D.C. area, where she directs research programs on neurogenic disorders of speech and swallowing. She is also Adjunct Professor at the University of Maryland, where she teaches a graduate course on motor speech disorders. Her research addresses neuromuscular properties and biomechanical functions of the speech production and swallowing mechanisms. Currently, her laboratory is conducting a multiyear project on swallowing disorders in wounded military personnel. Dr. Solomon has authored over 60 scientific papers and reviews, given over 100 presentations at national and international meetings, and received funding for her research from the US Army, the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Foundation. Dr. Solomon was named Fellow of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association in 2012.

~ All are welcome ~