



POKFULAM  
ROAD  
HONG KONG  
CHINA  
中國香港

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG  
Faculty of Education  
香港大學教育學院

Ms Rachel Li  
Tel: (852) 2219 4270  
Fax: (852) 2540 6360  
Email: lirachel@hku.hk

## **Press release**

### **A new treatment method for stroke survivors with swallowing disorders**

Swallowing disorders are common problems after stroke. Research studies have shown that approximately 50% of stroke survivors would develop swallowing disorders after stroke and the disorders would persist after they have been discharged from hospitals. Common symptoms of swallowing disorders include persistent weight loss, repeated episodes of pneumonia, refusal to eat, extra effort and time needed during eating, feeling of food sticking in the throat after eating, and/or food regurgitated into the nose or mouth after eating. Food may enter the airway during swallowing due to poor coordination of swallowing muscles. This may result in aspiration pneumonia, chest infection or even death.

The Swallowing Research Laboratory in the Division of Speech & Hearing Sciences, Faculty of Education, the University of Hong Kong has been conducting a study to investigate a new swallowing treatment method for stroke survivors since 2013. Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) is a non-invasive brain stimulation method of modulating the activity of the cerebral cortex. In recent years, researchers worldwide have found evidence in supporting the use of rTMS in the treatment of depression, as well as impaired limb functions and swallowing disorders associated with stroke.

The research team has already finished the first part of the study. A total of 17 stroke survivors participated in the study in which 11 of them received active rTMS whereas 6 of them received sham rTMS. Among those who received active rTMS, half of them showed improvements in swallowing functions such that they could swallow food more efficiently and safely. They showed greater improvements when compared with those participants who received sham rTMS.

The Swallowing Research Laboratory is now recruiting participants. If you, your friends or family members are interested in our study and suit the following inclusion criteria: 1) At least one year after stroke; 2) have swallowing disorders; 3) currently NOT on psychiatric medication; 4) NO metal or magnetic implant devices inside the body; 5) NO history of epilepsy; 6) understand simple instructions; and 7) aged within 18 to 80 years old, please do not hesitate to contact us. Our team will have further screening to confirm eligibility of the study. The study will last for one year and is free of charge. The study procedures include 4 swallowing assessment, 1 magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan and 10 sessions of rTMS. It will take place at the Main Campus of the University of Hong Kong. A travel allowance of HK\$50 will be given for every visit during the study. This study is funded by the Early Career Scheme, the University Grants Committee.

For more information, please contact Ms Theresa Yao (Tel: 3917 4667) or Ms Yuki Wong (Tel: 3917 1568/ E-mail: [yukiwyy@hku.hk](mailto:yukiwyy@hku.hk)) or visit the following website: <http://www.speech.hku.hk/clinic/swallowing/>

For media enquiries, please contact Ms Rachel Li, Senior Manager (Development and Communications), Faculty of Education, HKU (Tel: 2219 4270 / Fax: 2540 6360 / E-mail: [lirachel@hku.hk](mailto:lirachel@hku.hk)). Please visit <http://web.edu.hku.hk/media> to view the e-version of the press release and photos.

April 15, 2015