Interdisciplinary Collaboration

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Editorial

Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) often deal with individuals with swallowing impairments. These impairments can indicate a sensory or motor deficit and it is not uncommon to find the deficit closely related to a lack of taste sensation in the oral cavity. This gustatory function is rarely examined by SLPs with randomized controlled testing. It is generally superficially tested at bedside and often routinely screened by nursing or dietary services; however, the comprehensiveness of the nature of the testing is rarely reported. Recently, I have been involved in a randomized controlled taste testing of a cranial-facial clinical case. This was my first experience in the background and methodology of this procedure and as such, I partnered with professors and fellow investigators from the Family and Consumer Sciences Department at California State University, Long Beach. We also partnered with a maxillary-facial surgeon and a professor and nutritionist from the University of Brasilia in Brazil. This project became an international collaboration was a part of each specialist to educate the other in their particular field of specialty. It also became an interesting and needed expansion for scope of practice for the SLP. The randomized controlled nature of the study demanded that each investigator have a defensible evidence-base for the procedures and interpretation of results. This collaboration was highly successful in identifying minimal thresholds of sweet, sour, bitter, and salty substances in the client’s oral cavity. Theoretically, understanding how and which of these substances are perceived by the client can certainly assist in initiating the trigger of the swallow and have a profound effect in swallowing rehabilitation. Controlled and evidence-based taste testing should be a needed and effective part of every dysphasia therapist’s scope of practice [5-8].

References