

A Symptom That's Hard To Swallow: Dysphagia Management In Multiple Sclerosis

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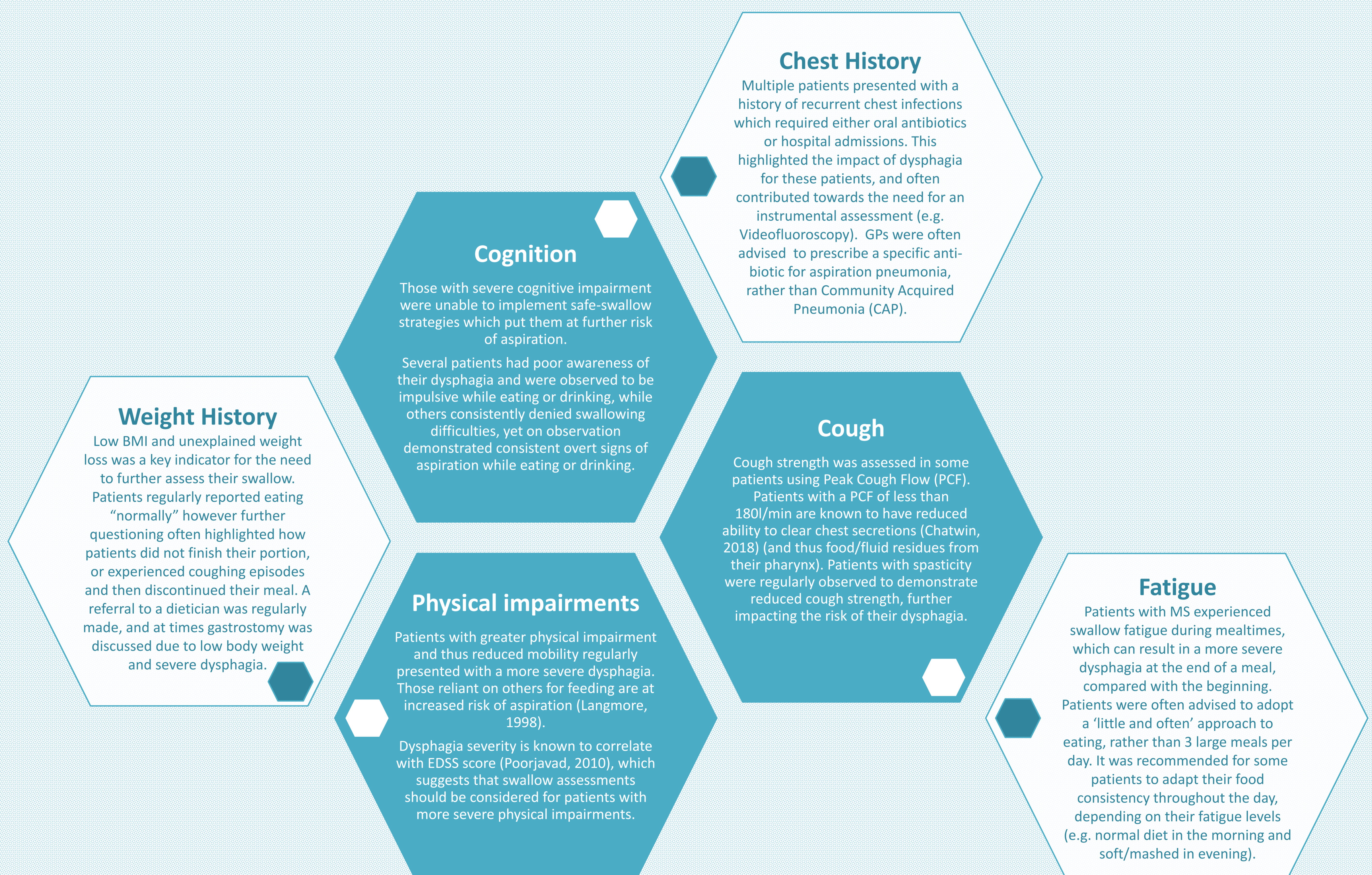
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Background:

Swallowing difficulties (dysphagia) in Multiple Sclerosis (MS) are known to impact on respiratory health, nutrition and quality of life. Dysphagia is caused by damage to several structures including the brainstem, cerebellum, corticobulbar tracts and cranial nerves (Calcagno et al., 2002). Dysphagia in MS is clinically challenging to manage given the complex relationship between relapse and recovery, respiratory function and cough, cognition, fatigue and physical disability. Speech and Language Therapists therefore must provide patient-centred dysphagia management.

Aims:

The themes for this project were taken through running a specialist SLT MS outpatient clinic, whereby patients were referred for initial dysphagia assessment and follow-up management. The aim was to identify themes and clinical considerations in dysphagia management in MS.



Conclusion:

The above themes highlight the clinical complexity of dysphagia management in Multiple Sclerosis. Those with moderate-severe dysphagia were often affected by more than one of the above factors, emphasising that dysphagia management can be clinically challenging and multi-factorial. Clinicians must adopt a holistic approach in the assessment and management of dysphagia in order to provide patients with high quality, patient-centered care.

References:

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