

Speech and Language Therapy Advanced Clinical Practitioners

Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust

The context

Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) are increasingly taking on advanced clinical practitioner roles. In the East Midlands, Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust employs 2 Clinical Lead Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) who have led on the development of extended roles across a breadth of SLT clinical practice. Based in the ENT department of Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust, the SLT ENT team have developed skills to provide weekly SLT-led laryngeal endoscopy clinics, using high levels of autonomous judgement and decision-making to assess and treat clients with a range of complex ENT disorders affecting voice, speech and swallow function. The Nottingham SLT Endoscopy training programme and competency framework which arose from this have been incorporated into national professional RCSLT guidelines.

How did you address this?

This extension to SLT clinical practice originated as part of the national 'Action on ENT' initiative within the NHS modernisation agenda. Objectives included streamlining SLT interventions, reducing patient waits for follow-up laryngeal examination with an ENT Consultant, and creating additional capacity within over-stretched Consultant clinics. SLT ENT lead clinicians developed and undertook competency- based training in performing and interpreting laryngeal examinations, systematically building skills with theoretical teaching, interpretation of laryngeal images, and practical nasendoscopy. Stages of training and safeguards put in place to ensure competence prior to full independent clinical practice included clinical observation and audited supervised practice by ENT consultant colleagues. Developed in the absence of any national SLT endoscopy competency guidelines at the time, the peer- reviewed Nottingham Competency Framework Document was subsequently incorporated into the RCSLT policy statement on SLT endoscopy for ENT disordered patients (October 2004).



Clinical Lead ENT Speech and Language Therapists: Katherine Behenna and Suzanne Slade

What difference did it make?

Audited clinical benefits of these clinics in Nottingham have included improved diagnostic accuracy (25% changed diagnosis from initial ENT examination); reduced patient waiting times (12 weeks reduced to 2 weeks) and improved efficacy of therapy, reflecting reported benefits of national and international studies in the literature (Refs 1,2). After a period of further in-house and external training, weekly SLT led-endoscopy in Nottingham were extended to include diagnostic swallow examinations (FEES – fibre optic endoscopic evaluation of swallow) with out-patient swallow clinics now offered to ENT patients with swallowing disorders arising primarily from Head and Neck Cancer or its treatment. Local Clinical Lead ENT SLT clinicians have run in-house and national training courses to facilitate the formal training and development of FEES competencies and autonomous clinical practice for other SLTs, both those working with patients with neurological disorders locally, as well as other ENT SLTs nationally.

References

1. Carding PN. Voice Pathology Clinics in the UK. *Clinical Otolaryngology* 2003; 28:477-8
2. Carding PN. The Changing Role of the Speech and Language Therapist in the UK. *ENT News*. 14;1:46-47