Students’ use of an objective protocol to measure swallowing: Accuracy and implications

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Abstract: Inter-rater reliability remains disappointingly low when clinicians evaluate filmed evaluations of persons with swallowing disorders. To address this concern, investigators have developed two protocols - one which measures the transit of food or liquid from the mouth to the esophagus at 17 landmarks and one which measures the same transit but at 5 landmarks. The current study examines the accuracy of two groups of student clinicians as they applied the 5-landmark protocol to a videofluoroscopic evaluation of a problematic swallow after a brief period of training. Data currently are being analyzed. If data show a statistically significant (p<0.05) relationship between the measures documented by the two groups of students, results will suggest that students with little clinical experience are able to learn and accurately apply the 5-landmark protocol. Further, this 5-landmark protocol will be a useful teaching tool in the preparation of students for clinical practice and to facilitate increased inter-rater reliability in swallowing evaluations.

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