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The Role of the Speech-Language Pathologist in the Performance and Interpretation of Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing: Position Statement

Position Statement

ASHA Special Interest Division 13, Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders (Dysphagia) Committee on Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing

About this Document

This position statement was developed by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Special Interest Division 13, Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders (Dysphagia) Committee on Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing. Members of the committee include: Susan Langmore (chair), Dee Adams Nikjeh, Paula Sullivan, Nancy Swigert, and Janet Brown (ASHA staff liaison). Celia Hooper, 2003–2005 vice president for professional practices in speech-language pathology, served as monitoring vice president.

It is the official position of the American Speech-Language Hearing Association that fiberoptic endoscopy is an imaging procedure that may be utilized by speech-language pathologists to evaluate swallowing function. Fiberoptic endoscopy may also be utilized as a therapeutic aid and biofeedback tool during the course of swallowing treatment. The assessment and management of dysphagia falls within the scope of

practice of speech-language pathology. Speech-language pathologists with expertise in dysphagia and specialized training in fiberoptic endoscopy are professionals qualified to use this procedure independently for the purpose of assessing swallowing function and related functions of structures within the upper aerodigestive tract. The procedure is not intended to replace the fiberoptic examination performed by the otolaryngologist to assess the integrity of the laryngeal and pharyngeal structures. Physicians use endoscopy for functional evaluation of swallowing and/or to assess the integrity of the laryngeal and pharyngeal structures in order to render a medical diagnosis. Within interdisciplinary settings, these medical diagnoses and swallowing function assessment procedures can be accomplished through the combined efforts of these related professionals. Care should be taken to use this examination only in settings where medical personnel are available to ensure patient safety.

[Return to Top](#)

Index terms: endoscopy, assessment, swallowing

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