

## **Evaluating the types of dysphagia among clients diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in state sector hospital settings in Western province, Sri Lanka**

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Alzheimer's disease (AD) associates with Dysphagia and often presenting with common symptoms like pneumonia, malnutrition, dehydration or even death. No previous studies have been done on this area in Sri Lankan (SL) context. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the types of dysphagia among AD in Sri Lanka. A mixed study design was conducted at state sector hospital setting among 40 AD clients (>18 years) with over 6 months of onset. Thirty-four participants (85%) were currently experiencing one or more dysphagia symptoms in pre oral and/or, oral and/or, esophageal stages. There was a significant negative correlation between the age and the severity of swallowing ( $r_s = -0.06$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Severity of swallowing with stages of swallowing ( $r = -0.601$ , pre-oral;  $r = -0.713$ , oro-pharyngeal) showed significant negative correlation ( $p < 0.001$ ). Symptoms related to dysphagia also were identified. Caregivers use their own techniques to manage dysphagia except two clients. No proper referral system was established in the current system. Current study can conclude the importance of using a detailed assessment for early identification of symptoms, level and the type of dysphagia. Proper protocol and referral pathway for speech and language therapists, caregiver/client training and counseling about dysphagia are essential. There is a high-risk prevalence of dysphagia among clients who are diagnosed with AD in Sri Lankan context.

**Keywords:** Alzheimer's disease, dementia, dysphagia management, speech and language therapist

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