



A SASS MINUTE

Why Score FEES Studies?

Diagnostic reports from FEES or MBS results are sometimes perplexing and confusing. Requesting SLPs can only shake their heads and wonder why they bothered seeking the studies. The lack of useable and pertinent information, or the disjointed and conflicting findings and recommendations, are disappointing.

The primary and underlying reason for poor reports is inadequate or incomplete analyses. If a food consistency is not tested, it cannot be talked

about or inferences made. Similarly, if event results are not analyzed sufficiently, abnormal behaviors are missed and cannot be addressed. Like most things in this modern, fast-paced world, we are pressured to give instant responses or results—two or three sentences. Proper analyses of swallowing studies are complex, time-consuming, and just plain difficult. Even the best analyses may leave many perplexing and unanswerable questions.

In the SASS Advanced FEES course, we discuss the need to closely observe every second, every frame, and every aspect of a swallow trial, and to identify and understand every potential problem event. It is not enough to say a patient aspirated or penetrated material into the larynx and airway. It is more informative to know when it occurred (before, during, or after swallow onset), where it entered the larynx, on what consistencies it occurred, AND how consistent were these observations across all swallow trials. One or two aspiration events during a 20-trial FEES is not terribly significant. However, identifying abnormal behaviors occurring repeatedly over the course of the study, and their characteristics, shed much more pertinent information about underlying causes, which leads to better informed clinical decisions.

Scoring occurrences and severity of behaviors for each swallowing trial is critical. How often do I hear, “I just don’t have time to score every swallow trial?” If so, why bother to instrumentally assess swallowing if you do not analyze and use the results to better understand your patient’s problems and to direct your intervention? The “time excuse” leads to time wasted.

At SASS, every aspect of the swallow study is

reviewed and each trial scored. Our score sheet is detailed and lengthy, but it clearly documents answers to the primary questions of swallowing *safety* (aspiration) and swallowing *efficiency* (penetration, residue,

PAS-5

- 1 – Normal
- 2 – Penetration with Reflex Response
- 3 – Penetration without Reflex Response
- 4 – Aspiration with Reflex Response
- 5 – Aspiration without Reflex Response

timing).

To score these events, SASS has devised a 5-point Penetration-Aspiration Scale (PAS-5) (inset). It mirrors the 8-point PAS (Rosenbek, et al., 1995) devised for the MBS. The PAS-5 is just for FEES. Both scales are multi-dimensional (scores more than one behavior), both are ordinal (low score=normal; high score=severity) and both describe depth of material entering the airway. SASS reliability studies show that experienced users have a 71% or better agreement using PAS-5; those with little to no experience agree at least 57% of the time. Scoring all swallow trials using the PAS-5 can provide an average rating or a mode score (most frequently occurring) (ex.: “3” occurred 15 out of 21 trials). This can be translated into an overall severity score (3 = moderate impairment and primarily an inefficient swallow mechanism).

Astute scoring provides a detailed and unique “picture” of swallowing safety and efficiency. Now, you have something to talk about!!

SASS-I-FRAZ and More!

Oral Infection Control Corner

- **ASHA CE Provider:** It's Official!! SASS is now a recognized, card-carrying, official ASHA Continuing Education Provider. We now will sponsor all of our own CE courses—FEES & others.

- **NEW Online Registration and NEW Course Location for SASS FEES Training Courses:** Online registration for all FEES courses is now available on the SASS website. Simply register for the course you want. Dr. A. will acknowledge the registration with a confirmation letter and all the links and information for hotel reservations. Speaking of hotels, beginning with the August Basic FEES course, all Nashville-based Basic and Advanced FEES courses at the Embassy Suites Airport. It will be larger in size, minutes from the Nashville International Airport, and offer other new amenities. We are very excited about this new move.

- **To FEED or Not To FEED.** Certainly, determining the safety of the swallow event is very important. Another factor is whether the patient's immune response is normal or depressed. If available, review the most recent blood work and look for WBC (white blood count). WBC is "high" at $10.8K/mm^3$ or above meaning antibodies are being recruited to fight infection. Specifically, look at the "neutrophil count" (high= $70\%+$)—the primary bacteria fighters. This means the body is susceptible and trying to fight bacterial infection, including pneumonia from aspiration. Given aspiration evidence on FEES and evidence of infection, decisions may be to withhold oral feeding until those factors improve. With reduced immunity, there is a higher bacteria load growing in the oral cavity. The Oral Infection Control program should ramp up to "Accelerated Oral Hygiene Treatment," or mouth cleaning a minimum of three times per day until WBC is normal again.

-ON THE ROAD AGAIN!:

Carolinas HealthCare System, Charlotte AHEC, Charlotte, North Carolina, is hosting a SASS Advanced FEES course September 24 and 25, 2016. Check our website for contact information.

Providence St. Peter Medical Center, Olympia, Washington, will host our Basic+ FEES course on November 11-13, 2016. This course combines our Basic and Advanced FEES courses into a compact, concentrated 19 hours course over three days. See our website for more information.

Clinical Note: Always use the "Q-tip Test" before referring or attempting FEES in patients or residents with possible aggressive physical behavior. Saves on time, possible personal injury, and expensive equipment repairs.



SASS FEES Training Courses: 2016

Basic FEES: Aug 20-21; Oct 8-9; Dec 3-4 - 1.5 CEs

Advanced FEES: Sep 17-18 - 1.4 CEs

"Top-Quality Training for over 6 years" - See website for more information



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