JCHAO Discovers FEES®

Maybe it is a sign of coming of age! Speech-Language Pathologists increasingly are using Fiberoptic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing (FEES®) to assess oropharyngeal dysphagia.

With growing up, the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) is taking a keen new interest in this specialized patient assessment practice. This means surveyors are looking for and reviewing documentation of practices related to patient safety and quality of care, and to insure they meet recognized standards and initiatives.

While Joint Commission inspections are well known to anyone working in the healthcare profession, particularly acute care hospitals; Speech Pathology has not usually been a primary focus area. Rehabilitation services, on the other hand, are included often in the surveys. Further, most state government healthcare agencies use Joint Commission accreditation standards for licensing healthcare facilities and businesses and as oversight and inspection criteria.

Recently, SLPs across the U.S. have reported Joint Commission surveyors specifically asking about FEES® practices, but more so about endoscope handling and infection control. In acute care hospitals, centralized sterile processing departments clean endoscopes after a FEES® study. Standardized cleaning processes are in place. However, it is important for the Speech Pathology Department to have specific procedures and documentation on how the endoscope is received, stored, length of time in storage, how it is handled during the procedure, and how it is bagged and stored waiting to return for reprocessing.

Outside care facilities, such as rehab hospitals, nursing care facilities, and some home health agencies, procedures and documentation for invasive assessments, such as FEES®, may not be up to current standards, and JCHAO is “dinging” facilities as non-compliant. It is said, “Well, Joint Commission was just at our facility, and they did not mention it.” True. It has been hit or miss, but the hits are increasingly more frequent.

For contract businesses providing FEES® services, not being in compliance is a double hit to the contracting facilities. The facility is out of compliance because the contracted services company is out of compliance, which holds ominous consequences from the state for the facility and its patients/residents. If the facility SLP staff provides FEES® assessments in-house, and cleans their scopes using high-level disinfectant, they must also meet JCHAO standards.

Regardless of facility or providers, endoscope cleaning must follow the manufacturer’s guidelines—to the “T”! Step-by-step, and these steps must be in the policies and procedures manual for the department.

SASS has, for 10 years, worked diligently to reach and comply with the industry standards to prevent cross-contamination with their endoscopes. We have done well-BUT more scrutiny means tighter compliance, more complexity, and more time. Providing FEES® services to assist with quality patient care is a privilege; but making it safe and top quality is a continuously complex and time-consuming challenge. We have to meet it!

If you can’t visually assess timing, consistency, amount, & frequency of aspiration, how can you treat it?
SA Swallowing Services, PLLC

Clinical Reminder – Again!

The “Q-Tip Test”: SASS highly encourages all referring SLPs to complete the “Q-Tip Test” before requesting a FEES study. Inserting a Q-tip into the lower part of the nasal passage and gently turning a few times grossly tests patient’s tolerance. With some patients, repeating this test several days in a row deconditions them, thus increases the likelihood they will allow passage of the endoscope for swallowing assessment.

New Course Announcement: “Preparing SLPs for Tracheostomy & Ventilator Patient Care.”

August 12, 2017 at Select Specialty Hospital, Nashville. Dr. Jamie Fisher is directing this new course. It’s for beginners, SLPs, and will include hands-on training. It is ASHA-approved for 7.5 CEs. For more information and the agenda, visit the SASS webpage and find the course listing. Registration has already begun and is limited to 48 participants. Oh yes, lunch will be provided.

Another New Course Announcement: “Videostroboscopy & Voicing Assessment.”

Saturday and Sunday, October 14 & 15, 2017 at Select Specialty Hospital, Nashville. Drs. William Irwin and John Ashford instruct this basic course in videostroboscopy to assess abnormal voicing. Approved for 1.5 CEs, this course will include presentations and hands-on practice with live subjects. Registration opening soon.

ASHA “Dysphagia and Older Adults”:

ASHA is offering a new installment of the webinar, Dysphagia and Older Adults, May 3 -15. All new presentations. Dr. Ashford is presenting on Oral Care—again! Each presentation is 60 minutes and can be accessed anytime on the ASHA website during the webinar dates. During the last week, live online Q & A sessions will be available for participants. More information and registration can be found on the ASHA website.

SASS is “On The Road Again”:

Charlotte AHEC, Charlotte, NC –May 2-3
Kaiser Sunnyside MC, Clackamas, OR - May 6-7
Oklahoma City, OK – planning
Olympia, WA – planning
Saratoga, FL – planning
Neptune, New Jersey? – planning
Janesville, WI? – planning
Johnson City, TN – ETSU – NSSLPA Conf. - 6/24

SASS FEES Training Courses: 2017

Basic FEES: July 15 & 16, & September 23 & 24 - 1.5 CEs
Advanced FEES: May 20 & 21 & October 21 & 22 - 1.5 CEs
“Top-Quality Training for over 7 years” - See website for more information

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Comments or Questions? Contact John R. Ashford, Ph.D., SASS Minute Editor at john@sasspllc.com
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