

SETTING

Private Clinic

PATIENT

You are 31 years old and suffer from a mild form of a chronic, progressive muscle disease. In the last 6 months, you have experienced increasing neurological weakness and swallowing difficulties, resulting in a weight loss of 3kg. Your doctor diagnosed dysphagia and has referred you to a speech pathologist for management advice.

TASK

- When asked, say that the difficulties started about 6 months ago. You find it really hard to swallow anything and often cough while you are eating. This is really embarrassing so you no longer visit family and friends. Say you don't know why you need to see a speech pathologist – you think you need surgery.
- Tell the speech pathologist that one of your friends had surgery for swallowing difficulties and the operation was a great success.
- Ask what the non-surgical options are.
- Say you understand that you can change your diet, but you still don't understand how the speech pathologist is going to help you.
- Reluctantly agree to begin speech therapy.

SETTING

Private Clinic

PATHOLOGIST

Your patient is 31 years old and suffers from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)/motor neurone disease (MND), a chronic, progressive muscle disease. Recently, he/she experienced increasing neurological weakness and swallowing difficulties, resulting in a weight loss of 3kg. He/she was diagnosed with dysphagia and has been referred to you for management advice.

TASK

- Confirm the reason for the patient's referral (dysphagia). Find out details about the problem (onset, symptoms, effect on daily life, etc.).
- Explore the patient's reasons for wanting surgery.
- Give information about surgery for swallowing problems (severe cases only, patient unable to take sufficient food/drink for nutritional requirements, oral intake unsafe, etc.).
- Outline non-surgical strategies for managing swallowing difficulties (e.g., dietary modification, adopting safe swallowing techniques, ensuring optimal sitting procedure when eating/drinking, etc.).
- Give details of how speech pathology can help (e.g., improve muscle movement, show positions/strategies to help swallow more effectively, optimise swallow pattern, etc.). Establish the patient's willingness to begin speech therapy.