Children and adults with cerebral palsy and other developmental disabilities frequently experience difficulty eating, drinking and swallowing. Modification of food texture and liquid consistency is a key and commonly used strategy to help reduce the risk of aspiration and choking. However, challenges can arise when making dysphagia diet recommendations due to varying terminology and definitions of the levels of different food textures and liquid thicknesses. Miscommunication can lead to serious health consequences including death.

Objectives

In 2013, the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) was launched with the goal of improving the safety of individuals with dysphagia by:

• Developing internationally recognized standardized terminology and definitions of food and liquids relevant for all ages, cultures and conditions.

• Developing a strategy for supporting implementation of the framework globally

IDDSI Framework Development

• A scoping review of existing standards confirmed the need for common terminology and definitions.

• A practice survey of >2000 health professionals, food service professionals, people with dysphagia, caregivers, care organizations, researchers and industry partners identified widespread confusion and variation in practice in the use of existing terminology.

• A systematic review of existing literature identified what is known about the influence of food texture and liquid consistency on oral processing and swallowing behaviours.

• Framework Development: Draft descriptors of texture and flow behaviour were developed at a consensus meeting.

• Stakeholder consultation was completed to obtain feedback on the draft framework. A survey of >3100 individuals in 57 countries showed overwhelmingly positive feedback to the proposed framework. Specific responses were used to guide framework refinement for official launch.

IDDSI Resources

• Draft descriptors of texture and flow characteristics were developed at a consensus meeting.

• These are foods that change "state" with the addition of moisture, pressure or temperature and reflect the type of "first" chewing foods often used with young children.

• Level 5 - Moist and minced.

• Particle size (adult) is 4mm or fits between the tines of a standard fork.

• Level 6 - Pureed.

• Particle size (adult) is at roughly the thickness of an average pencil lead, ~0.7mm

• Pressure till end of nail

• Foods

• Level 7 - Puréed.

• Particle size (adult) is at the size of a new penny (~1.9mm)

• Pressure till end of nail

• Foods

Testing methods for food were felt to be critical tools to ensure consistency in diet application. Methods had to be:

• Simple but reliable

• Cost effective

• Accessible to individuals in any country and setting so alternative methods include chopsticks and fingers

Fork pressure test

Level 4-7, transitional foods

Pressure till end of nail blanches (~17 kPa)

Monitor-Aware-Prepare-Adopt

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