

## **A Descriptive Study on Profile of Clients with Dysphagia Referred to Speech Therapy Units in Two Government Hospital Settings**

W.A.M.A. Weerasinghe<sup>1</sup>, S.Ratnayake<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Department of Disability Studies, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya*

The study was aimed at identifying commonly presented initial symptoms and feeding method on the initial session of dysphagic clients. A descriptive cross-sectional study design was used with a retrospective chart review. Data of 100 completed records of dysphagic patients who were above the age of 12 years were studied. Participants included patients referred to speech therapy units of two hospital settings within a 6-month period. Mean and standard deviation of age of the participants was 61.12 years and 14.36 years respectively. Median time duration between on set to referral is 11 days. Most prevalent cause for dysphagia was cerebrovascular accident (79%). Additionally, progressive neurological disorders and 'other' causes were observed. 32% were in severely dysphagic, while another 32% were moderately severe and 9% were mild. Of all the participants, oral and pharyngeal phase was affected in 52% of participants. At the time of admission to the speech therapy unit, 58% of patients relied only on non-oral feeding methods. Commonly presented symptoms were impaired trigger (63%), coughing (52%) and voice quality changes (29%). According to chi square test, there was no association between presence / absence of dysarthria and severity of dysphagia. Most of the clients were older and referrals were taking a long duration. The study findings suggest the importance of early referral and also the need to generate awareness about the symptoms to help in early identification. Recommendations are made such that screening assessment should be done for all stroke clients to identify any risk of aspirations.