

A Survey Investigating the Opinions and Experiences of the Multidisciplinary Team Regarding Reactive Nasogastric Tube Feeding in the Community for Patients with Head and Neck Cancer

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Abstract

Purpose: An investigation of the opinions and experiences of UK Multidisciplinary Team healthcare professionals regarding reactive nasogastric tube (NGT) enteral feeding in the community, for patients being treated for head and neck cancer.

Method: An online questionnaire was developed to collect experiences of recommending NGT use in the community, benefits and disadvantages of this method, and improvements that could be made. A total of 34 healthcare professionals including speech and language therapists (18), dietitians (4), head and neck cancer nurses (10), and consultant oncologists (2) completed the questionnaire. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including the relationships between views on NGT use, professional role, experience level and geographical location.

Results: Referrals for NGT use in the community did not differ across geographical location or profession. Cancer of the oral cavity, oro-pharynx, hypopharynx and larynx had the highest referral rates. Perceived benefits and disadvantages different across professions, however observed effects were similar across professions. Clinicians felt that NGT feeding in the community could be made more accessible. Many professionals without a Trust community NGT policy would support the development of one.

Conclusions: This survey has shown that healthcare professionals feel community NGT use is a viable option for enteral nutrition. However, further support is needed for patients to access and maintain NGTs in the community. Further research is needed to understand the most important aspects of decision-making for community NGT feeding. This could support the development of a decision-making tool to ensure the method of enteral nutrition is optimal for each individual.

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