The Value of Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) in Acute Care

**SLP Involvement in Acute Care Improves Healthcare Quality and Reduces Cost.**

### Better Patient Health Outcomes

- **Patients with stroke seen by SLPs in acute care are . . .**
  - Less likely to experience death following dysphagia treatment (27%), evaluation (58%), and screening (71%).
  - Less likely to develop pneumonia (39%–44%) or dysphagia-related complications (27%).
  - More likely to achieve an oral diet (19%) and to functionally swallow at 6 months post discharge following swallowing treatment (41%).

- **Patients with tracheostomy seen by an acute-care interdisciplinary team including SLPs . . .**
  - Are more likely to tolerate oral diets (89%);
  - Initiate oral diets an average of 12 days sooner;
  - Are more likely to undergo cuff deflation (7%);
  - Decannulate an average of 6–8 days sooner;
  - Are less likely to experience tracheostomy tube blockages (68%), rapid response calls for respiratory distress (55%), or other adverse events (25%).

- **Patients with post-extubation dysphagia seen by SLPs in acute care . . .**
  - Successfully resume oral diets and eliminate G-tube dependency (87%).

- **Patients who are intubated and are seen by SLPs in acute care . . .**
  - Successfully communicate pain symptoms 3.87 times more often and are less likely to experience difficulty communicating with staff (60%).

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### Lower Hospital Costs

- **Patients with stroke seen by SLPs in acute care have . . .**
  - A shorter length of stay (LoS) by an average of 3 days.

- **Patients with partial laryngectomy seen by SLPs in acute care are . . .**
  - Safely discharged on an oral diet (52%) following a 2-day intensive dysphagia treatment, with an average cost savings of $8,000.

- **Patients with tracheostomy seen by an acute-care interdisciplinary team including SLPs have . . .**
  - A shorter LoS by an average of 8 days and a shorter LoS in the ICU by an average of 15 days.

### Improved Care Team Self–Efficacy and Performance

- **Medical team members who receive training by an SLP in acute care . . .**
  - Are 3 times more likely to use writing, gestures, lipreading, and yes/no questions;
  - Are 6 times more likely to be confident using augmentative and alternative communication tools with patients with severe communication deficits;
  - Can identify an average of 37 more relevant communication strategies;
  - Are more likely to be confident in working with people with tracheostomy (27%).

### Better Patient Communication

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### % Requiring Less Supervision or Assistance at Discharge

- **Swallowing**
  - 0% to 60%
- **Cognition**
  - 0% to 60%

- 40% of patients with swallowing disorders and 49% of patients with cognitive-communication disorders treated by SLPs in acute care required less supervision or assistance at discharge.

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*Patients seen by an acute care interdisciplinary team including SLPs*
References