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Changes in Speech & Swallowing Associated with Multiple Sclerosis Presented by: Marissa A. Barrera, MS, MSCS, TSHH, CCC-SLP

The Facts:

- 44% of the MS patients experience impairments of speech and voice in the early onset of their disease.
- It is estimated that between 45% and 65% of all people with MS experience problems with memory, attention, word-finding, problem-solving, or other cognitive functions as a symptom of the disease.
- 33% of MS patients report impairments of voice, chewing and swallowing capabilities.
- There is very little relationship between the severity of physical symptoms and the severity of cognitive problems. In other words, some people have experience severe physical symptoms but little difficulty with cognition.

Referral for Treatment:

- Only 2% of MS patients are appropriately referred for treatment of speech, voice and swallowing disorders.
- Less than 1% of patients receive appropriate cognitive intervention.

Speech and Language Disorders Associated with MS:

- The most common speech and language disorders associated with MS are dysarthria, dysphagia, and anomia.

Dysarthria- is a speech disorder that occurs from weakness or incoordination of the speech muscles. Speech sounds “sloppy”, imprecise, uncoordinated and effortful. Vocal volume may be low and running out of air when communicating is commonly reported.

- **Treatment** is very effective. LSVT®, respiratory training, compensatory strategies, and oromotor exercises to improve the strength, tone and endurance of muscles.

Dysphagia-is difficulty swallowing food, liquid or saliva. People frequently report food or drink “going down the wrong pipe”. Dysphagia is a very dangerous condition. Even patients with mild dysphagia can develop aspiration pneumonia.

- **Treatment** includes VitalStim® (Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation), compensatory strategies, biofeedback (sEMG,pressure), effortful swallow, oromotor exercise, thermotactile stim, Mendelsohn, Masako and Shaker maneuvers.

Anomia- is a cognitive disorder described as difficulty finding words, labeling and/or naming objects and retrieving linguistic information from your memory.

- **Treatment** includes the development of an individualized cognitive rehabilitation program using both traditional (cognitive- linguistics exercises) and computerized methods (Bugalow®, Parrot® and Lumosity®) to enhance patient training.

Have questions? Email- MBarrera@nyneuroslp.com Website- www.nyneuroslp.com Call: 212.453.0036
