E-Poster

EP-185

The Impact of Rehabilitation on Mitigating Oral and Swallowing Disorders in Children with Cerebral Palsy: A Cohort Study

Topic: Health Conditions (Nervous System, Musculoskeletal System, Cardiopulmonary System)

Y. Loukhmas Youssra Loukhmas[1], S. Maidoumi Sanaa Maidoumi[2], M. sbai Mohammed Sbai[3], I. chahid Imane Chahid[4], A.A. Bousfiha Ahmed Aziz Bousfiha[5]

[1]*Physical Therapy Unit, Abderrahim El Harouchi Children's Hospital, Ibn Rochd University Hospital / Hassan II University, Casablanca, Morocco*

[2]*High institute of Nursing Professions and Technical Health, Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakesh, Morocco*

[3]*Department of Occupational Therapy, Brain Plasticity & Neurorehabilitation, College of Health, The University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, United States*

[4]*Department of Pediatrics 3, Abderrahim El Harouchi Children's Hospital, Ibn Rochd University Hospital, Casablanca, Morocco*

[5]*Laboratory of Clinical Immunology, Inflammation and Allergy LICIA, Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, Hassan II University, Casablanca, Morocco*

BACKGROUND

Oral and swallowing disorders in children with cerebral palsy (CP) represent a significant public health concern, as they hinder normal growth, compromise adequate nutrition, and adversely affect pulmonary function. This study aimed to evaluate the impact of rehabilitation on mitigating these disorders by comparing children who had received rehabilitation (Rehabilitation Group, RG) to those who had not (Control Group, CG).

METHODS

The study involved 30 participants, aged 1 to 12 years, who were classified as levels 4 and 5 on the Gross Motor Function Classification System (GMFCS). These participants were recruited from two data collection centers, with 15 patients at each site. This is the first study in North Africa (NA) and the Middle East (ME) aimed at collecting health, nutritional, and social data from children with CP to improve their quality of life and ensure their growth.

RESULTS

The findings revealed that feeding time, a critical indicator of oral and swallowing disorders, exceeded 30 minutes in the CG. While most participants in the RG were seated appropriately to facilitate swallowing, a notable proportion of the CG (87%) experienced respiratory difficulties, with 60% demonstrating a lack of feeding autonomy. Statistical analyses indicated significant associations between respiratory problems and food consistency ($p<0.05$), as well as between feeding time and swallowing frequency. Additionally, proper posture was found to improve swallowing outcomes ($p<0.05$). The sensitivity impairments associated with CP influenced the tone of the lips, cheeks, mandible, and tongue, further compounding feeding difficulties.

CONCLUSION

Despite the study's limited sample size, the results underscore the critical role of rehabilitation in addressing motor and sensory challenges, as well as the importance of raising parental awareness through practitioner education. The overarching aim of this research is to promote healthy growth in children with cerebral palsy, while reducing the risks of undernutrition and potentially life-threatening respiratory complications.

Early rehabilitation is essential for addressing feeding disorders, and the expertise of skilled caregivers in improving the quality of life for children with CP remains important. As the first study of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa, it holds particular significance in advancing clinical understanding care practices.

Statement of Disclosures

None

Doi: 10.5606/archisprm.2026.EP-185

Corresponding Author:
Y. Loukhmas Youssra Loukhmas
Physical Therapy Unit, Abderrahim El Harouchi Children's Hospital, Ibn Rochd University Hospital / Hassan II University, Casablanca, Morocco
Email: youssraloukhmas@gmail.com