




# Speech Language Pathologists


Contribution for Head and Neck Cancer Patients



# What do Speech Language Pathologists specialize in?


- ▶ Speech
- ▶ Language
- ▶ Swallowing
- ▶ Cognitive communication
- ▶ Social communication
- ▶ Auditory processing
- ▶ Fluency
- ▶ Voice disorders
- ▶ AAC (Alternative and augmentative communication)

- ▶ Disorders we might see in our head and neck cancer population
- ▶ Swallowing
- ▶ Cognitive communication
- ▶ Speech
- ▶ Language
- ▶ Auditory processing
- ▶ Voice



# Swallowing in the head and neck population

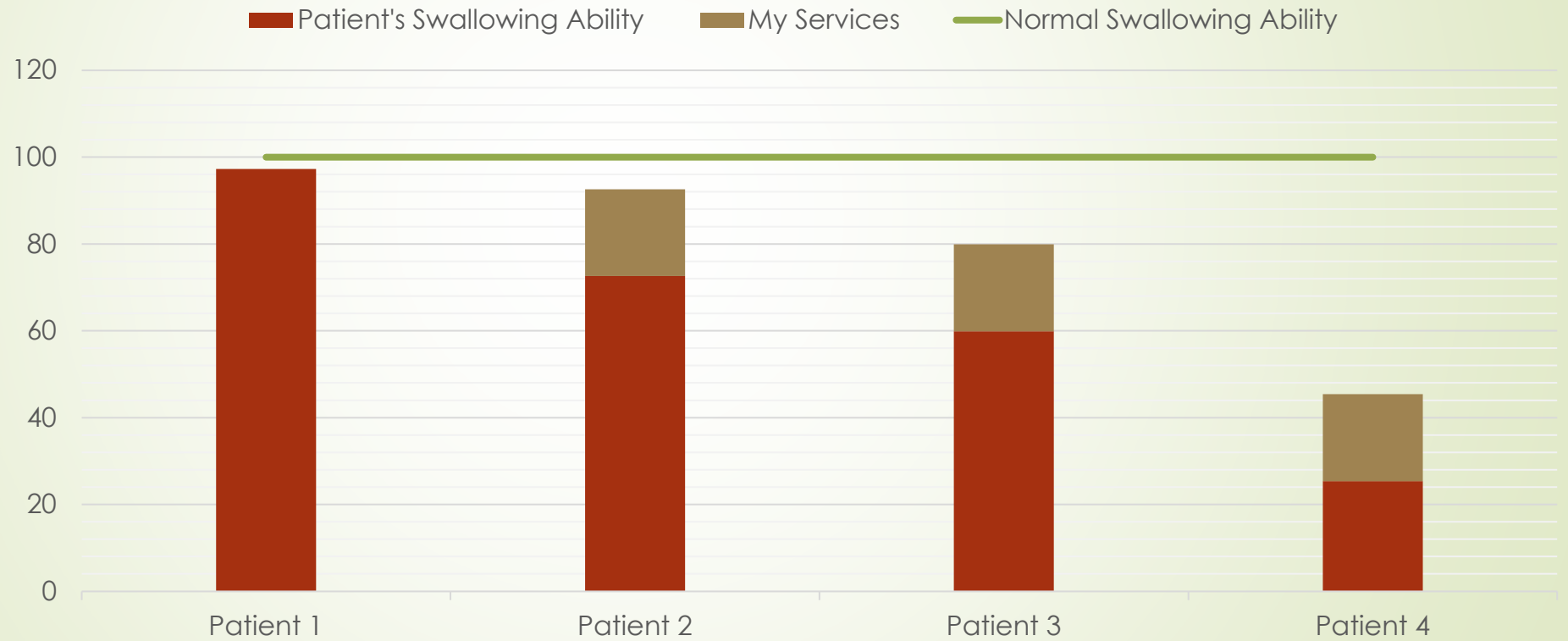
- ▶ Barbon et al., 2022 found that exercise was associated with a higher likelihood of solid diet intake and improved swallow safety.
- ▶ Hutcheson et al., 2013 found that patients who both eat and exercise have the highest rate of return to a regular diet and the shortest duration of gastrostomy dependence.



# Swallowing in the head and neck population

- ▶ Langmore et al., 2012 found that those who did not receive prophylactic PEGS and those who maintained an oral or a partial oral diet during radiation therapy had significantly better diet outcomes at all times post radiation.
- ▶ AND dependence on a PEG may lead to adverse swallowing ability in post-irradiated head and neck cancer patients possibly due to decreased use of the swallowing musculature.
- ▶ Smith et al., 2014 noted a 60% improvement after complete decongestive lymphatic therapy with regards to lymphedema severity rating or surface tape measure.

# Sooner is better





# Let's talk lymphedema


- Sooner is better
- If there is swelling on the outside = there is swelling on the inside
- Please put Lymphedema on the order/referral
  
- At Presbyterian, physical therapists treat lymphedema. There are certified therapists at Healthplex and Southern Outpatient
- At Lovelace, there is an occupational therapist at the Westside hospital and two at Women's
- At UNM they have an SLP who is certified



# Outcomes



- ▶ Prophylactic exercises are shown in the literature to be the most effective for regular diet outcomes
- ▶ Our biggest challenge is with compliance at home and pain management
  - ▶ Consider Gabapentin – Starmer et al., 2017 demonstrated improved one year outcomes with prophylactic use of gabapentin for pain management during chemoradiation + therapy
  - ▶ SLP therapy for the swallow and physical/occupational therapy for lymphedema



# Without services this is what we see in the acute environment

- Frail
- Fibrotic
- Malnourished
- Dehydrated
- Compromised health
- Not a candidate for PEG due to frailty
- Compromised rehab prognosis
- Reduced quality of life