



The Dysphagia Game

Case Study

Promoting Safer Swallowing

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@DysphagiaGame

the
DYSPHAGIA
game



The Dysphagia Game

Dysphagia is a condition that makes swallowing food and drinks difficult. It affects people of all ages and is particularly associated with dementia, Parkinson’s disease, cancer and can also affect people who have had strokes or surgery around the head or neck.

Dysphagia increases the risk of malnutrition, dehydration, aspiration pneumonia and choking. Dysphagia also affects quality of life as a result of malnutrition, dehydration, anxiety and embarrassment. The most common management strategy for dysphagia is to change the consistency and texture of food and drink to make it easier for people to control their swallow. A range of products is available to thicken food and fluid for a “texture modified diet”.

What we did

Dysphagia, however, is poorly understood by healthcare workers, and engaging frontline staff in training is difficult, especially in busy care homes and hospitals. Moreover, good face-to-face or online training tools are not always available or accessible. This lack of understanding and education exposes patients to avoidable discomfort, pain and death.

There is therefore a need for practical frontline education to help improve the detection and management of dysphagia.

Seeking to address this educational deficit, and inspired by the recent success of “serious” games such as The Nutrition Game, NHS England engaged Focus Games to develop a unique game-based training tool to help improve detection and management of dysphagia. Nutricia Advanced Medical Nutrition agreed to sponsor and actively support the development, manufacturing and distribution of the game.

This partnership identified two main goals for frontline engagement:

1. **Increase awareness of dysphagia among health and social care workers**
2. **Improve competency in use of thickeners**

Nutricia, NHS England, and Focus Games then collaborated to develop the following:

1. **A board game for face-to-face engagement at the frontline of healthcare**
2. **An online version of the board game that can be played on any device, to extend the reach and impact of the programme**

A steering group of experts was convened from the following organisations:

- **Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists**
- **British Dietetic Association**
- **National Nurses Nutrition Group**
- **National Association of Care Catering**
- **BAPEN (British Association of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition)**
- **Barchester Healthcare.**

This group defined the learning objectives for the game:

1. **Describe the problem in clinical and human terms**
2. **Illuminate the size and seriousness of the problem**
3. **Explain that players can have direct influence on patient safety**
4. **Offer simple risk assessment and management advice that can be put into practice immediately**

The game is aimed primarily at frontline healthcare professionals in hospitals, care homes, hospices and universities.



The Game

The game is designed for 2 teams and can accommodate between 4 and 10 players. It takes between 30 and 60 minutes to play and can be used in any care setting; all you need is a table and some chairs.

You can play the online version of the game and find more information at <http://www.dysphagiagame.com>.



About us...

We've been developing educational board games in healthcare since 2004. Our games are built around specific healthcare issues and are easy to play but deliver a sophisticated learning experience.

Games encourage interaction, engagement, teamwork and fun. They are designed to bring people together and change their thinking and behaviour to improve collaboration and performance.

Our games simplify issues into a series of meaningful discussions and decisions that immerse players in a motivational process of learning through experience. Our games can deliver measurable changes in behaviour and performance.

The Dysphagia Game was developed with Focus Games LTD, NHS England, Nutricia Advanced Medical Nutrition, British Dietetic Association and The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.



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