

# TraPCAf & Parkinson's Africa Virtual Support Group Series 2024

## Session 1: Speech, Communication & Swallowing difficulties in PWP

Session leaders:

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From Newcastle. **For the world.**

## Outline of session:

*PwP often experience difficulties in these four areas:*

- Speech
- Communication
- Swallowing and oral motor functioning
- Cognitive-linguistic skills



# Speech

## Some of the difficulties commonly seen in the Speech of PwPs:

- The **volume** of the voice may have become low, i.e. your voice becomes soft.
  - The **clarity** or clearness of your speech may be affected. Sometimes speech is slurred in PD.
  - Voice may become **monotonous** i.e. you have only one volume level and a flat tone. The voice may sound like it does not have any emotion when you are happy or excited or sad or angry, and sounds ‘*expressionless*’
  - The same thing may happen with your face, where your *face* may appear ‘*blank*’ or ‘*expressionless*’, this is called a ‘**Masked Face**’.
- A combination of all these factors may make you feel embarrassed or may make speaking an extremely frustrating experience for PwP. At the same time, this may also be difficult for people trying to understand what you are trying to say. Such problems may make you feel like staying away from conversations with others.



# Communication

- Isolation in social settings and socially withdrawn.
- Word retrieval/finding difficulties.
  - “You know what you want to say but are unable to retrieve/find the word’
  - “Tip of your tongue”
- Reduced activity and participation.



# Swallowing and oral motor functioning

***Swallowing difficulties experienced, as the mouth and throat muscles become weak due to Parkinson's. This affects the control patients have over chewing and swallowing.***

- Several people with PD have trouble controlling the flow of saliva which can lead to drooling or dribbling i.e. excess saliva coming out from your mouth.
- This can sometimes happen while speaking. This causes PwPs to swallow less saliva and it gets collected in their mouth. Thus, instead of being swallowed, it dribbles from the corners of their mouth.
- Sometimes drooling can lead to feeling of shame and embarrassment in public and PwPs may avoid socialization due to this symptom of PD.
- Some people with PD may experience dryness of the mouth which is often a side effect of the certain PD medications.
- It becomes difficult to speak because it feels like your mouth is stuck from the inside.



# Swallowing and oral motor functioning

- Swallowing is a complex process which has three different phases:
  - Oral preparatory phase
  - Oral phase
  - Pharyngeal phase
  
- Dysphagia “Difficulties with one and/more of the phases of swallowing”
- Common complaints experienced by PwPs:
  - Coughing after drinking liquids
  - Choking episodes, food gets ‘stuck’
  - Difficulty swallowing medication
  - Prolonged time at mealtimes to complete meal
  
- ST role in dysphagia management and support for PwPs.



## Cognitive-linguistic skills

*Difficulties experienced in these areas of cognition have been noted, not all PwP will experience these difficulties and they can range from mild to more severe.*

- Attention
- Orientation
- Recall, working memory
- Reasoning
- Planning
- Decision making



# Thank you!

For more information and resources visit: [www.parkinsonsafrica.org](http://www.parkinsonsafrica.org)

Get in touch if you have a query: [tania@parkinsonsafrica.org](mailto:tania@parkinsonsafrica.org)

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