

Research on Dysphagia in the 21st Century

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New health problems have been worrying public health authorities. Some of them appear and find the health system unprepared, causing great turmoil – which is the case of the COVID-19 pandemic that spread worldwide in 2020.

Another problem (to which the health system can get prepared) has been progressively increasing – and addressing it will require a great deal of effort and resources. The awareness of the growing prevalence of dysphagia in the population [1,2] led to the establishment of the Dysphagia Research Society (DRS), the European Society for Swallowing Disorders (ESSD), the Japanese Society of Dysphagia Rehabilitation (JSDR), the Latin American Dysphagia Society (SLAD), and various national societies.

Dysphagia means swallowing difficulty [3] that affects people at any age and whose diagnosis and treatment are costly. It is associated with an increase in mortality rates and significantly impairs people's quality of life.

Dysphagia has many different causes, including age-related diseases, neurological or neurodegenerative diseases, head and neck diseases, and esophageal diseases [3]. A particular cause of concern is the significant increase in the proportion of older adults in the population. Between 1995 and 2017, life expectancy increased by 8.6% in Latin America and the Caribbean (from 69.7 years in 1995 to 75.7 years in 2017) and by 4.7% in North America (from 76.2 years in 1995 to 79.8 years in 2017) [4].

Addressing the problem requires skilled professionals, resources, and organization. The progress obtained in the diagnosis and treatment must be accompanied by competent use of the resources available, which in turn requires research to establish the best procedure and to understand the causes of dysphagia and the pathophysiology of swallowing disorders.

Since dysphagia is an increasingly prevalent symptom, the amount of related research must increase proportionately. Such an increase is noticed in the progress of abstracts presented at the Dysphagia Research Society conferences [5] and publications in *Dysphagia*, a journal specifically focused on this field.

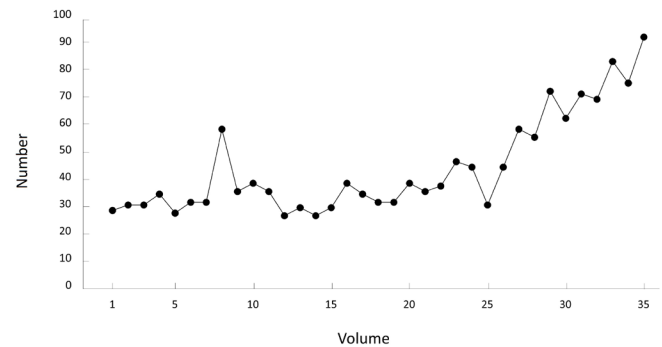


Figure 1: Number of original and review papers published in the journal *Dysphagia* from volume 1 (1986-1987) to volume 35 (2020).

The total number of papers published in *Dysphagia* from volume 1 (1986-1987) to volume 35 (2020) is shown in (Figure 1). There was a considerable increase in the number of publications from volume 26 (2011). Also, in the most recent volumes, the number of published papers is twice as much as those in the initial volumes. The journal used to publish four issues a year up until 2013, increasing the frequency to six issues a year in 2014 to meet the growing number of papers being submitted. The same observation must be made regarding other journals where the results of the investigation of dysphagia can be published.

Dysphagia is a symptom that affects patients whose diseases are approached by different specialties. Hence, it requires a multidisciplinary effort towards diagnosis and treatment, as well as new knowledge to provide patients with the best attention possible. Thus, there will be a significant impact on their survival and quality of life.

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Rec: 10 Apr 2021; Acc: 25 Apr 2021; Pub: 28 Apr 2021

Front Gastroenterol Hepatol. 2021;1(1):101
DOI: 10.36879/FGH.21.000101

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