

Assessing and Treating Dysphagia: A Lifespan Perspective

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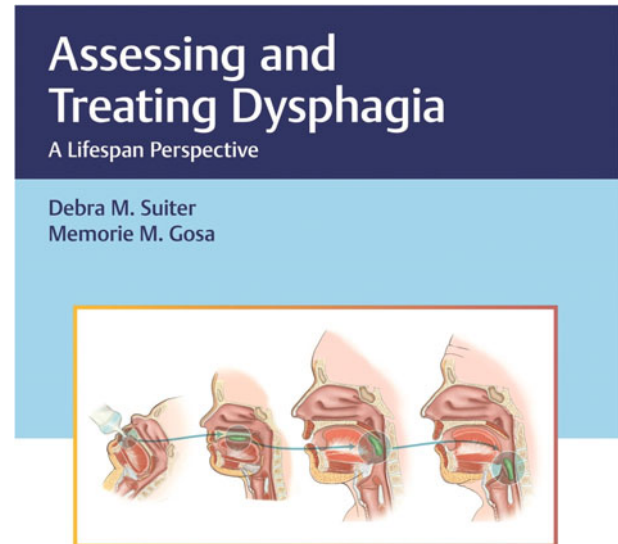
The arrival of this book was particularly timely for this reviewer, who has spent the morning staring at a pot of Greek yoghurt determined to try to swallow it, however painfully. Repeated robotic surgery of the tongue base, tonsillectomy, various dental extractions and bilateral neck dissections in the last four weeks are not conducive to enjoying Christmas lunch. That is now all too obvious.

Even without the personal interest, this is still a very thought-provoking book. We do all work in multidisciplinary teams, but, if we are to be honest, we often have little idea of what our various colleagues do get up to, after we have sought their help.

The book itself is, of course, a hard back text of the quality to be expected from Thieme. The colour illustrations are of a very high standard throughout, and the format, with bullet points, boxed learning objectives, clear topic headings and a multi-author contribution, is very familiar, as this publisher continues that remarkable output of ENT literature. Each chapter closes with a series of multiple choice questions, with detailed answers and explanations. The numerous case presentations are particularly well done.

A first skim through the content revealed topic headings such as 'What are the indications for performing a video-fluoroscopic exam?' or 'How does one choose between video-fluoroscopy and FEES?'. I will freely admit that I have referred many a head and neck patient for such, solely at the request of the speech and language pathologist, but would, until today, have struggled to answer either question.

The 28 chapters comprehensively cover the topic of dysphagia, from the opening basic sciences to the closing ethics and palliative care. Early chapters address screening and objective measures to evaluate swallowing; these topics are then repeated in three further chapters specifically addressing paediatric care. The interventions to influence dysphagia, including tube feeding and the effect of tracheostomy, follow.



Finally, 10 chapters consider swallowing disorders in specific diseases, such as stroke, head and neck cancer, craniofacial syndromes, or neurodegenerative abnormalities.

I am almost embarrassed to say how much I learnt from this book. At 43 years after my first tonsillectomy, I seem to have survived a career in otolaryngology, totally relying on my speech and language pathologist colleagues to assess and manage dysphagia. They are undoubtedly the target audience for this excellent publication, but there is simply a wealth of content here for the clinician who has the initiative to learn something of their work.

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