

South East London Community Head and Neck Team (CHANT) Surgical Voice Restoration (SVR) Service

Background

The Community Head and Neck Cancer Speech and Language Therapy team offer rehabilitation and long-term support for patients following total laryngectomy. The Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) is a keyworker for patients who have undergone laryngectomy.

Approach

Patients with SVR are offered a package of care for rehabilitation on discharge home post-surgery, which typically comprises:

- Initial home visit within 48 working hours of discharge
- Intensive SLT input to establish adequate stoma and voice prosthesis care, including emergency management and troubleshooting. This may involve providing training for carers and/or District Nurses if the patient is deemed unable to complete all care independently
- Establishment of Heat Moisture Exchange (HME) system use
- Regular SLT input aiming to establish functional voice with SVR, focusing on voicing technique, troubleshooting, and working with family/friends to support generalised communication rehabilitation. Access to videofluoroscopy if detailed voicing assessment is required
- Regular voice prosthesis changes usually carried out at Guy's Hospital however, also in the community (typically patient's homes or south-east London hospital)

Challenges

- Consideration of clinical infection control and environmental risks
- Personnel and equipment – service provision (2 SLTs), infection control and access to needed equipment
- Access to ENT

Outcome/Impact

- Across a 6-month period, CHANT have carried out 9 SVR appointments/voice prosthesis changes in the community setting
- Improvement in patient accessing SVR service - particularly during COVID-19 pandemic, for patients with mobility issues, palliative/end of life patients etc
- Care more personalised and provided closer to home
- Reduced clinical burden on acute colleagues

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- No adverse events have occurred
- Reduced demand on hospital transport
- Development of a local Community Head and Neck Team SLT Laryngectomy policy
- Risk assessment pioneered by CHANT used nationally by other services
- Business case submission to cancer alliance to apply for funding for a project post to explore the potential need for a more established community SVR service using patient and staff co-design

“The impact of the CHANT community SVR service was truly felt when we went to see a lady who lived quite far from Guy’s Hospital and wasn’t able to attend a hospital based SVR clinic due to feeling unwell from recent treatment for bowel cancer. Over the multiple changes we carried out for her, both her and her husband were so grateful for the service we provided within the comfort of her own home. Even when we was well enough to attend hospital for valve changes following these visits, she expressed a desire for valve changes to continue at home”

Katie Lee, Advanced Specialist Speech and Language Therapist

Top Tips

Data collection! Collecting data throughout the implementation of the service and beyond has led to us being able to explore funding options to develop the service to reach its potential for our patients.