

## Collaboration between Dietician and Occupational Therapist, Promotes Independent Functional Eating in Tube Weaning Process of Mechanical Ventilated Patients

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**Abstract :** early active movement, along with adjusting optimal nutrition, prevents aggravation of muscle degeneracy and functional decline. Eating is a basic activity of daily life, which reflects the patient's independence. When eating and feeding are experienced successfully, they lead to a sense of pleasure and satisfaction. However, when they are experienced as a difficulty, they might evoke feelings of helplessness and frustration. This stresses the essential process of gradual weaning off the enteral feeding tube. The work describes the collaboration of a dietitian, determining the nutritional needs of patients undergoing enteral tube weaning as part of the rehabilitation process, with the suited treatment of an occupational therapist. Occupational therapy intervention regarding eating capabilities focuses on improving the required motor and cognitive components, along with environmental adjustments and aids, imparting eating strategies and training to patients and their families. The project was conducted in the long-term, ventilated patients' department at the Herzfeld Rehabilitation Geriatric Medical Center on patients undergoing enteral tube weaning with the staff's assistance. Establishing continuous collaboration between the dietician and the occupational therapist, starting from the beginning of the feeding-tube weaning process: 1. The dietician updates the occupational therapist about the start of the process and the approved diet. 2. The occupational therapist performs cognitive, motor, and functional assessments and treatments regarding the patient's eating capabilities and recommends the required adjustments for independent eating according to the FIM (Functional Independence Measure) scale. 3. The occupational therapist closely follows up on the patient's degree of independence in eating and provides a repeated update to the dietician. 4. The dietician accordingly guides the ward staff on whether and how to feed the patient or allow independent eating. The project aimed to promote patients toward independent feeding, which leads to a sense of empowerment, enjoyment of the eating experience, and progress of functional ability, along with performing active movements that will motivate mobilization. From the beginning of 2022, 26 patients participated in the project. 79% of all patients who started the weaning process from tube feeding achieved different levels of independence in feeding (independence levels ranged from supervision (FIM-5) to complete independence (FIM-7)). The integration of occupational therapy and dietary treatment is based on a patient-centered approach while considering the patient's personal needs, preferences, and goals. This interdisciplinary partnership is essential for meeting the complex needs of prolonged mechanically ventilated patients and promotes independent functioning and quality of life.

**Keywords :** dietary, mechanical ventilation, occupational therapy, tube feeding weaning

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