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Background

Neuromuscular conditions are a prominent cause of upper limb weakness. For this group of people eating and drinking can be difficult, frustrating, time consuming and a reliance on other. This study examined the everyday experiences, benefits and difficulties that users of eating and drinking devices face.

Method

Semi structured interviews were conducted either by telephone or via email to users of both manually operated and powered eating devices. Personal factors, Reasons for wanting the device, psychological impact following initial use, changes to QoL, benefits and limitations were explored



Neater Eater with ceramic plate.

Thematic Analysis

Independence: *"I wanted to try something new and hoped it would be useful to my life I was excited to regain independence and feed myself again".*

Emotions: *"Apprehension, positivity, dignity frustration, confidence".*

Impact on life: *"Excited to be able to feed myself especially at school when it can be embarrassing".*

Motivation : *"You need the mind set for it to make a difference".*

Comments

"Food goes cold for slow eaters"

"The plastic plate [optional] is childish".

Conclusions

Eating devices afford independence, freedom and improved QoL

Users reported being able to enjoy eating as a social event not just an ADL.

Users desire for independence were crucial for a successful outcome.

Importance of to the user.

↓ time pressures

matching technology Labour saving

↓ carer stress.

Implications for O.T's

*Ensure recommendation for assistive technology is client centred.

*The importance of relatives/carers being familiar with the AT, its ethical, practical, pedagogical, psychological, organisational and financial implications.

*Consideration of the clients perceptions of their disability, anxiety levels and the characteristics of the AT before recommending it.