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WATCH AND LEARN: A DIETITIAN'S ACCOUNT OF NASOGASTRIC TUBE FEEDING

On January 18th 2016, Sean White, Home Enteral Feeding (HEF) Dietitian in Sheffield, spent a week without any oral diet and fluids, receiving his complete nutrition via a nasogastric (NG) tube. He did this out of professional curiosity and to raise money for the South Yorkshire branch of the Motor Neurone Disease Association (MNDA). During the week Sean kept a video diary reflecting on his experience.

Sean is HEF Clinical Lead of the Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition Group (PENG), a Specialist Group of the BDA. He applied for a PENG research and audit grant to enable him to have his footage edited into a short educational film. The grant is open to all members of PENG and is a great way to complete projects which not only lead to improvements in patient care, but also support the researchers' professional development. (www.peng.org.uk/education-research/peng-grants.php).

Sean's film is now available online to everyone (not just PENG members) at www.peng.org.uk/education-research/feeding-tube-challenge.php. It provides an insight into some of the practical considerations and challenges associated with home enteral feeding, covering both bolus feeding, where feed is given at regular intervals during the day through a syringe, and pump feeding, where feed is continuously infused at a set rate via an electronic pump. Sean even gets his daughter Eve involved with setting up his pump feed. This, and many other elements of the video, not only demonstrate how the family can be involved, but also recognises how those of all ages can be supported to use enteral feeding equipment.

Sean clearly recognises the organisation, planning and time required to meet his nutritional needs (and those of his patients), using both methods of feeding and this allows viewers to

consider the pros and cons of each option in order to provide information to a patient, someone in their care, or for themselves.

Sean covers the side effects that he experiences and gives an insight into the management of some troubleshooting issues. One of the most commonly experienced problems with NG feeding is getting a gastric aspirate, a vital component, to confirm that the tip of the tube is in the stomach. This is a definite part to watch for any professional or patient who has ever struggled to get an aspirate.

On the last day of feeding, Sean also explored what it would be like to eat a variety of different textures with a nasogastric tube in place. This is important, as many people may have a feeding tube placed to provide supplementary nutrition, or may be transitioning from tube-feeding to oral intake.

In addition, Sean attempts a blended diet, which is the process of blending homemade foods (his chicken dinner) to a liquid consistency to allow it to be given through his feeding tube. Although this method of feeding isn't typically recommended by dietitians, there appears to be a growing interest for this within the UK, therefore, giving an important insight into the processing of blending and administration.

The week, however, would not be complete without Sean sharing his



Above: Sean White living with a nasogastric tube for a week.

Below: Sean's daughter Eve helping him with bolus feeding.



Sean has already received positive comments about the impact that his video is having on influencing healthcare professional practice and its potential for use as a teaching aid.

"This is worth a watch - walking in the patients' shoes - for a week! It's fabulous and a great teaching aid. It highlights some of those things that we never get to see, but that would be real issues for our patients."

Hilary (Chief Nurse)

"Fascinating work and thank you for making this available. If able, I hope to incorporate this into the stroke unit local induction."

Keiran (Stroke nurse)

"Thank you for a really interesting, informative and inspiring film - it really highlighted some of the challenges that our patients have to face every day."

Well done for persevering through the week and doing so much to raise awareness!"

Eleanor (SALT)

experiences with a patient who requires long-term home enteral feeding, a very poignant ending.

Watch this space though, as this is unlikely to be the last you see of Sean. He has received a great number of responses from dietitians who have said that they would also like to try NG feeding and, so, he has a vision in the future to recruit several dietitians and different health professionals to feed via a nasogastric tube for the same week. Undoubtedly a great PR exercise for the profession, a valuable learning experience for those involved and could also provide huge potential to raise the profile and awareness of home enteral feeding.

Although this is a vision, Sean can confirm that he is working on another video-based patient resource: "I am involved in another project with our local MND centre, developing a website containing film footage of patient experience of making the decision to have a feeding tube placed and life on HEF. It is intended to support decision making prior to gastrostomy placement."

If Sean's video has inspired you to think of how undertaking service development, research or audit could influence your practice and/or patient care why not consider the PENG grant (www.peng.org.uk/education-research/peng-grants.php).