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**A pilot project to evaluate an intensive desensitisation, oral tolerance therapy and hunger provocation programme for children who have had prolonged tube feeds.**

**Faiman A, Wright J and Harding C**

Abstract:

Three children on prolonged PEG feeding supplementary to oral feeding participated in a pilot project that compared an intensive multi-disciplinary feeding programme with a traditional feeding multi-disciplinary programme for long term gavage feeders. Two children underwent a daily one week long intensive group feeding therapy programme run whilst the third child elected to maintain receiving the traditional input of Feeding Clinic. The intensive programme relied on dietetic assessment and reduction of tube feeds, speech and language therapy evaluation of oral motor skill development and daily psychology support for care givers. The two children who participated in the intensive programme demonstrated a significant increase in oral intake with a maintained reduction in daily tube feeds. Child 3, who carried on with the Traditional approach had no change in weight over the period of the research. One month after completion of programme at the first post follow up, child 1 had completed a staged discontinuation of tube feeds, child 2 had maintained tube feeds at a reduced level as per their intervention week. No weight losses were reported with any of the children.

In addition to the weight results, children maintained oral motor skills as assessed using the Paediatric Oral Motor Skills Package, (POSP; 1996), significantly increased the number of spoonfuls of food, and fluid amounts taken orally. Parental language style and children's verbal responses were also analysed and significant differences in these areas were noted, with parents using a less directive and more facilitative style, and with children becoming more actively involved in the social aspect of the mealtime. Qualitative results from parent participants suggests that an intensive programme has longer term maintenance effects for both the child and the parents.

Words 280

**Key words;** Intensive Feeding Programme; long term tube dependency.