

Prevalence of Vocal Tract Discomfort (VTD) in healthy subjects above the age of 65 years old

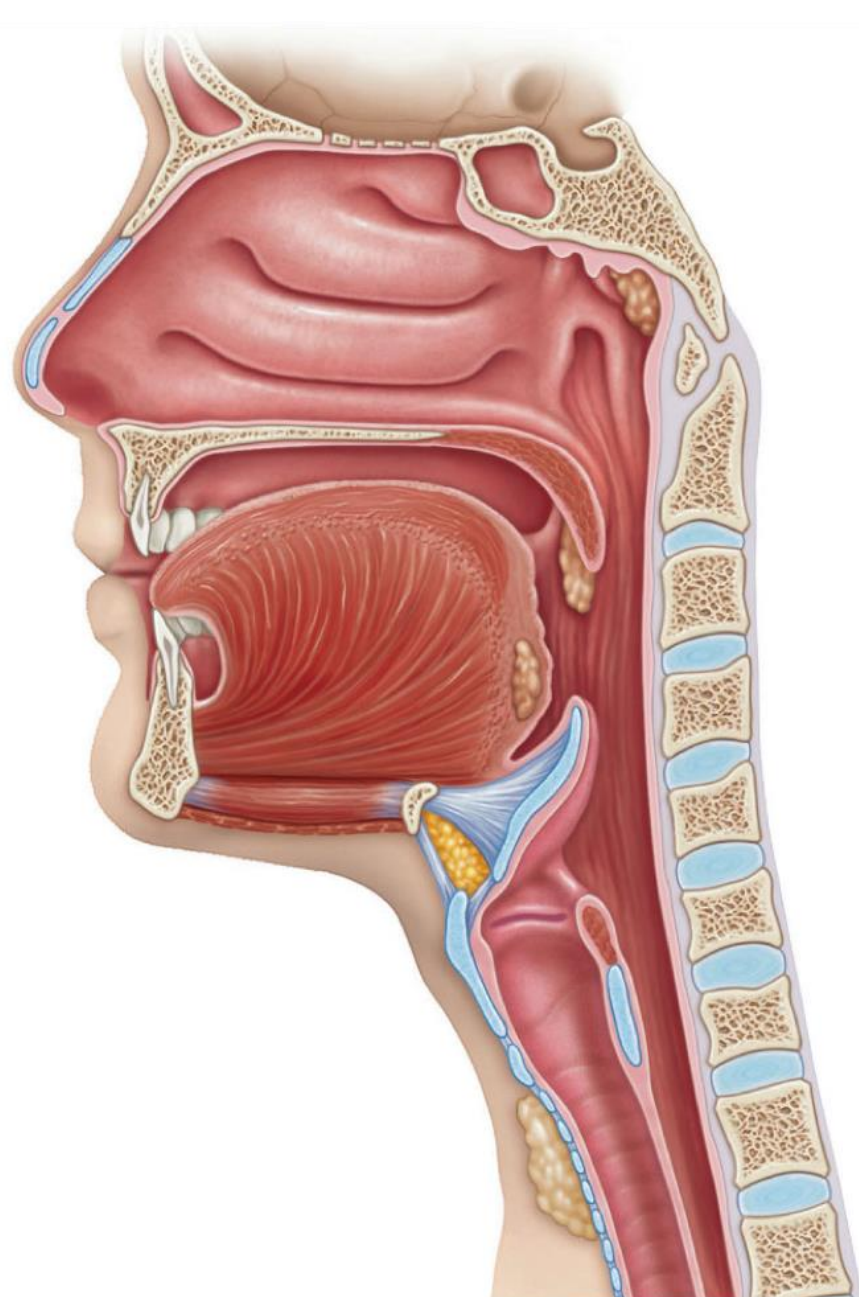
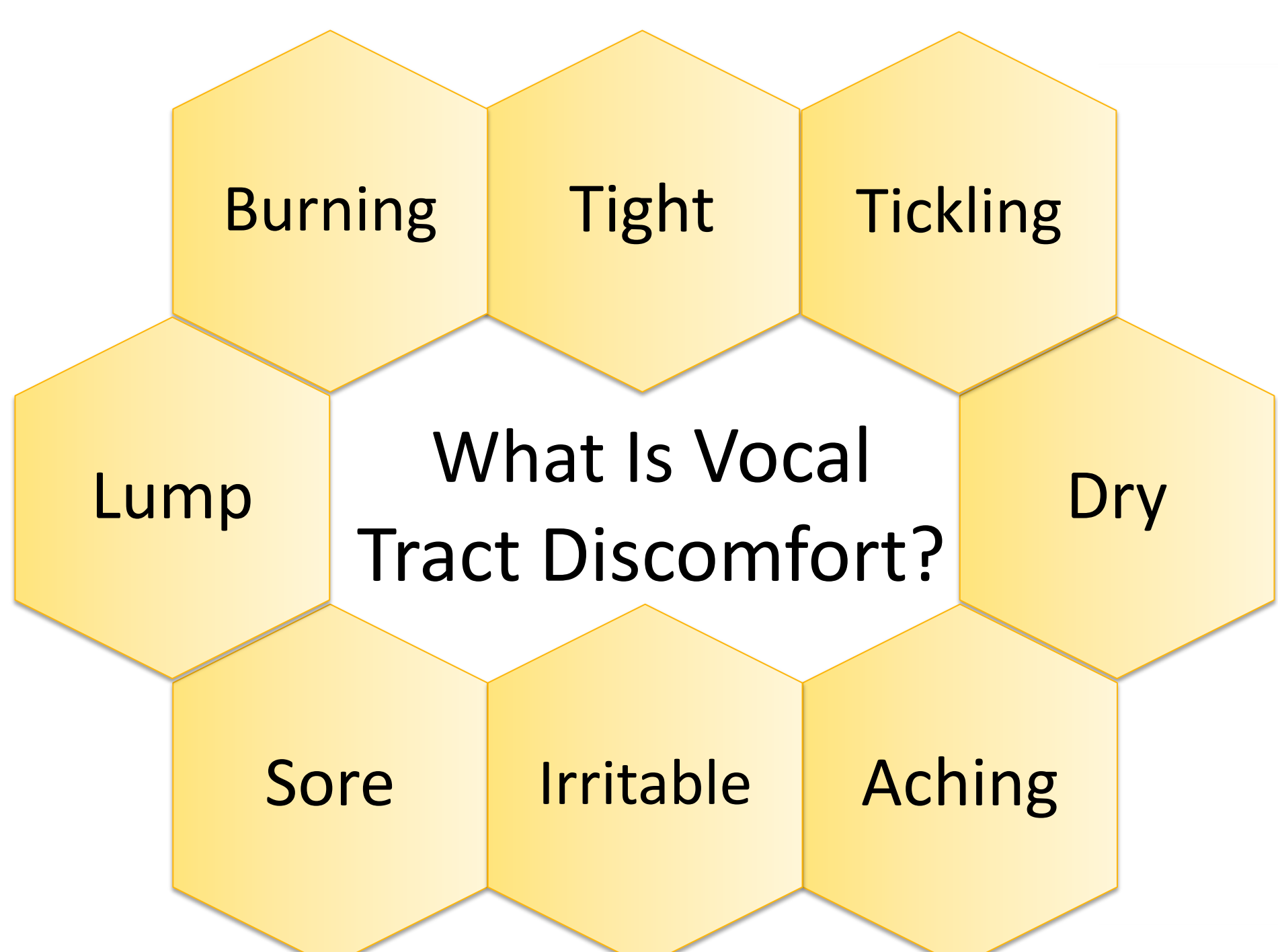
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Relevance

People with voice disorders often experience discomforting feelings in the vocal tract (i.e. Vocal Tract Discomfort – VTD)^{1,2}, but **can these sensations only occur as a direct consequence of the voice pathology?** Prevalence data in Flemish elderly were gathered in order to find out whether VTD also occurs in the healthy elderly population.

Symptomatology



Methods

Subjects

271 subjects
Mean: 74,77 years
[64,67 – 94,25]

116 men
Mean: 74,70 years
[64,67 – 91,17]

155 women
Mean: 74,82 years
[65,00 – 94,25]

Materials

VTD-scale
(Frequency & severity)

Corporal Pain scale

Voice Handicap Index
(Quality of life)

GRBASI rating
(Voice quality – consensus)

Statistical analyses ($\alpha = 0,05$)

- ✓ Nonparametric Mann-Whitney U
- ✓ Nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis & Bonferroni correction
- ✓ Spearman's rank correlation coefficient

Results

Prevalence

62,0% (168/271) reports
at least one VTD-symptom

1. Tickling sensation – 39,1% (106/271)
2. Dryness – 33,9% (92/271)
3. Lump in the throat – 29,2% (79/271)

The more often = the more severe!

Relations

| Significant | Non-significant |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Gender ~ lump | Age |
| Vocal load ~ burning ~ tickling ~ dry ~ lump ~ irritation | Smoking |
| Reflux ~ burning ~ aching | Having (grand-) children |

Correlations

| | Frequency tickling | Intensity tickling |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| VHI | r = 0,440 | r = 0,421 |
| Interpretation | Moderate | Moderate |
| Pain in the throat | r = 0,290 | r = 0,299 |
| Interpretation | Weak | Weak |
| | Frequency burning | Intensity burning |
| VHI | r = 0,279 | r = 0,280 |
| Interpretation | Weak | Weak |

Conclusions

- ✓ VTD frequently occurs in healthy elderly subjects.
- ✓ VTD occurs less frequently in elderly (62,0%) than in younger populations (88,0%)³.
- ✓ Teachers report increased amount of symptoms, even after retiring.
- ✓ VTD-scale adds additional important information to voice assessment protocols.