

Journal Club Article Review

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A patient with dementia and cancer: to feed via percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy tube or not?

Sanjay H Shah Cransley Hospice and Kettering General Hospital, Kettering

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Abstract

Despite the lack of clear benefits of feeding via gastrostomy tube in dementia patients, its use has been increasing. The views of health professionals, patients and their carers differ widely about the perceived benefits, which makes decision-making difficult and stressful. The palliative care approach of facilitating better communication and end-of life care planning can help avoid inappropriate gastrostomy tube placements. A case of an elderly male with dementia and two malignancies is described, and the place of the palliative care approach is explored.

PROS:

- good objective questions to be answered
- provided statistics that could be used in decision making and discussed with families
- prognostic factors of PEG tube placement in the elderly very useful in the clinical setting

CONS:

- no advantages or description of their belief in appropriate use of PEG - article very one sided
- no critical analysis of papers cited for evidence
- no description of the specifics of their literature search

RELEVANCE

Both within and outside the acute palliative setting, families are concerned about the nutritional status of their terminally ill loved ones who have inadequate oral intake and, as such, may ask about tube feeding/PEG tubes

This review article possesses evidence based information that could be used by physicians and discussed with families in deciding whether or not to proceed with this intervention. The appropriate use of the PEG tube needs to be decided on a case by case basis.