FOOD: a multicentre randomised trial evaluating feeding policies in patients admitted to hospital with a recent stroke

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Record Status
This is a bibliographic record of a published health technology assessment from a member of INAHTA. No evaluation of the quality of this assessment has been made for the HTA database.

Citation

Authors' objectives
The aim of this report was to determine whether routine oral nutritional supplementation of a normal hospital diet improves outcome after stroke (Trial 1); whether early tube feeding improves the outcomes of dysphagic stroke patients (Trial 2); and if tube feeding via a percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG) results in better outcomes than that via a nasogastric tube (NG) (Trial 3).

Authors' conclusions
The results of Trial 1 would be compatible with oral supplementation being associated with a 1-2% absolute benefit or harm, but do not support routine supplementation of hospital diet for unselected stroke patients who are predominantly well nourished on admission. In Trial 2, the data suggest that a policy of early tube feeding may substantially reduce the risk of dying after stroke and it is very unlikely that the alternative policy of avoiding early tube feeding would significantly improve survival. Improved survival may be at the expense of increasing the proportion surviving with poor outcome. These data might usefully inform the difficult discussions about whether or not to feed a patient with a severe stroke. In Trial 3, the data suggest that in the first 2-3 weeks after acute stroke, better functional outcomes result from feeding via NG tube than PEG tube, although there was no major difference in survival. These data do not support a policy of early initiation of PEG feeding in dysphagic stroke patients. Future research might be focused on making NG tube feeding safer and more effective, also studies need to confirm the increased risk of gastrointestinal haemorrhage associated with tube feeding and, if confirmed, establish whether any interventions might reduce this risk. Future work might also aim to establish why worse functional outcomes occurred in PEG-fed patients because patients with prolonged dysphagia or intolerance of an NG tube are inevitably fed via a PEG tube.

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