When Eating Problems Arise in Advanced Dementia: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Communicating with Caregivers (TH301)

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Objectives
• Describe the natural history of advanced dementia.
• Identify the nature and the causes of the eating/feeding problems in a patient with advanced dementia and describe potential treatment burdens associated with artificial nutrition in patients with advanced dementia.
• Discuss various options for addressing eating/feeding difficulties in patients with advanced dementia.

With the aging population of the United States, dementia is becoming a national healthcare problem. Geriatricians and palliative care providers will be unable to provide care to the rapidly growing number of patients with advanced dementia; therefore it becomes imperative to train as many healthcare providers and interdisciplinary team members as possible about the course of the dementia and nature of the complications in the advanced stages of the disease. Advanced dementia is often not recognized by healthcare providers as a terminal disease. This lack of knowledge is cited as the major barrier in developing plans of care aligned with patient needs. Eating and feeding problems are frequent complications in advanced dementia patients. We aim to provide the session participants with a model interdisciplinary approach to discuss eating/feeding problems and treatment approaches with the family of a patient with advanced dementia. The educational intervention can be provided to various levels of medical trainees as well as other disciplines such as nursing, speech pathology, and social work. The video of a family meeting we developed and produced has important and challenging trigger questions meant to be discussed with the participants. The video will be used as a centerpiece for a group workshop that will start out with a clinical case. We will then play the video until a trigger question is shown; we will allow the participants to test their own knowledge base and approach to the question raised in the video. Faculty then will facilitate a group discussion, during which the participants will share their answers while faculty touch upon the most recent evidence pertaining to each individual question. Attendees’ self-reported skill level and satisfaction with the workshop will be assessed via a retrospective pre-post survey. Session participants can apply the knowledge, skills, and materials shared to improve the care of patients with advanced dementia.