

Seniors not seeking treatment for common, debilitating swallowing and voice problems

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Despite widespread suffering of debilitating swallowing and voice problems among seniors, many are not seeking treatment for these issues, according to new research presented at the 2008 American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery Foundation (AAO-HNSF) Annual Meeting & OTO EXPO, in Chicago, IL.

According to the study, authored by researchers at Duke University Medical Center, elderly patients too often accept their voice and swallowing issues (including severe swallowing difficulties caused by dysphagia and dysphonia) as part of the natural process of aging. Researchers found that among 248 patients with an average age of 82, while over half the patients with dysphonia and dysphagia were interested in treatment, only 20 percent actually sought treatment.

Furthermore, researchers concluded because of the quality of life issues surrounding voice and swallowing problems (leading afflicted patients to report increased depression, anxiety, and social withdrawal), the medical community should actively and diligently seek to assess and address these impairments among the elderly. This includes the development of outreach programs to educate seniors and healthcare providers of the signs, symptoms, and available treatments of voice and swallowing disorders.

Source: American Academy of Otolaryngology

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