

Karen M. Sheffler, MS, CCC-SLP, BCS-S
Board Certified Specialist in Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders

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Employment Objectives

- To excel as a specialist in the area of medical-speech-language pathology, particularly in the field of swallowing and swallowing disorders (dysphagia).
- To provide expert opinion in the field of adult and geriatric dysphagia to healthcare professionals, the public, industry, and as an expert witness in litigations.
- To perform evaluations and treatments with the adult and geriatric populations in a multidisciplinary acute-care setting and across the continuum of care.
- To contribute to the training of medical-speech-language pathologists and students through direct and online teaching opportunities, connecting with these professionals and students globally.

Employment History

May 2014 - Current:

Founder, website developer/manager, and chief editor/writer of www.SwallowStudy.com: Dysphagia Resource for Professionals & People with Difficulty Swallowing.

- Provide evidence-based blogs, resources, and product reviews on **[SwallowStudy.com](http://www.SwallowStudy.com)**, connecting globally through conferences and social media (@SwallowStudySLP on Facebook and Twitter).
- Promote dysphagia research globally through collaboration with clinicians, researchers and industry partners.
- Provide online and live seminars on best-evidenced-based practice.
- Official Dysphagia Blogger for the 2014 ASHA Convention, Orlando, FL.
 - One of only four official bloggers for the national convention.
 - Wrote blogs prior to and after the convention and maintained a social media presence throughout the convention.
- Official Dysphagia Blogger for the 23rd Annual Meeting of the Dysphagia Research Society, March, 2015, Chicago, IL and for the 24th Annual Meeting of the Dysphagia Research Society, February, 2016, Tucson, AZ. (Volunteered for this role in 2017-19.)
 - Initiated the proposal in 2014 to the Dysphagia Research Society to have a social media presence prior to, during and after the meeting.
 - Assisted the Dysphagia Research Society in developing their presence on social media in 2015. Continue to promote the Society through social media, 2015-current, attending annual meetings every year.
 - Wrote blogs prior to and after the annual meetings in 2015, 2016, & 2017. Edited and published a guest blogger after the 2018 annual meeting.
 - Managed the Dysphagia Research Society's Twitter & Facebook accounts from 2017-March 2020.

- Published blogs on DysphagiaCafe.com, GrayMatterTherapy.com, [ASHAsphere at blog.asha.org](http://ASHAsphere.at.blog.asha.org), MedBridgeEducation.com, SDX Dysphagia Experts (Swallowing Diagnostics, LLC), and National Foundation of Swallowing Disorders at SwallowingDisorderFoundation.com.
- **Expert witness** (2016 - current), providing both plaintiff and defense services in field of medical Speech-Language Pathology, specifically regarding swallowing disorders (dysphagia) for adults and geriatrics.
- Peer-reviewer for courses in order for the following organizations to maintain ASHA - Approved CE Provider status: American Board of Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders (ABSSD); MedBridge Education; and DysphagiaGrandRounds.com.
- Created dysphagia content for MedBridgeEducation.com's online platform, containing home exercise programs and patient education.
- Champion for IDDSI (volunteer): assisting in promotion and implementation of the International Dysphagia Diet Standardization Initiative (IDDSI). Trained by the IDDSI board to promote IDDSI and educate the public on the new framework and testing methods. Assisted in the following research: http://iddsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Mapping-Varibar_Short-version-1.pdf
- Dysphagia expert and consultant for Hormel Foods Corporation/Hormel Health Labs. Member of the Advisory Council for Hormel Health Labs (HHL).
- Product review and analysis, collaborating with industry as a dysphagia expert.

October 2015 - Current:

Speech-Language Pathologist Per Diem. Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Boston. Provide inpatient Speech-Language Pathology services in the acute to critical care setting for adults-geriatrics, including bedside evaluations and treatments, Videofluoroscopic Swallow Studies (VFSS), and Fiberoptic Endoscopic Evaluations of Swallowing (FEES). Provide outpatient diagnostic services with VFSS. Provide expert opinion and training to new clinicians.

January 2012 – December 2018:

Speech-Language Pathologist Per Diem. Newton-Wellesley Hospital: Partner's Healthcare. Provided inpatient Speech-Language Pathology services in the acute to critical care setting for adults-geriatrics, including bedside evaluations and treatments, Videofluoroscopic Swallow Studies (VFSS), and Fiberoptic Endoscopic Evaluations of Swallowing (FEES). Provided outpatient services with VFSS.

May 2013 – 2016:

Lecturer at Tufts University Dental School.

Trained dental students how speech, language, and swallowing issues affect their patients and potentially impact their dental procedures.

Emphasized the impact of oral hygiene on prevention of aspiration pneumonia.

December 1999 – December 2013:

Speech-Language Pathologist. Carney Hospital: A Steward Family Hospital, Dorchester, MA.

- **1999-2007:** Provided full-time services as the only SLP for inpatient adults-geriatrics, inpatient/outpatient Videofluoroscopic Swallow Studies (VFSS), outpatient adults and pediatrics, and the Transitional Care Unit. (The TCU was a rehabilitation unit within the hospital, and I was the sole SLP from 1999-2006 when it closed).
- **2007-2013:** Provided part-time services (24-32 hours per week) as the only SLP evaluating and treating the inpatient adult-geriatric population. Additionally, performed all of the inpatient/outpatient Videofluoroscopic Swallow Studies (VFSS) and some of the outpatient adult cognitive-linguistic and swallowing therapies.
- Established relationships with area universities: Supervised students' three-month and six-month internships from 2001 – 2013.
- Trained new nurses, nursing students, certified nursing assistants, 4th year medical students, and incoming house officers.
- Collaborated on a daily basis with the discharge planners to ensure continuity of care and advocate for the best discharge plan per the patients' goals of care/safety needs.
- Created and maintained all Carney Hospital Speech-Language Pathology Policies.
- Implemented and Managed the Dysphagia Program:
 - Marketed services for inpatient/outpatient VFSS.
 - Collaborated with dietitians to start dysphagia rounds for patient safety.
 - Designed, implemented and trained the Nursing Swallow Screen.
 - Created a Standard of Care to define Aspiration Precautions.
 - Initiated multiple patient-safety Continuous Quality Improvement projects (i.e., tray accuracy).
 - Established a policy for SLP Diet Ordering Privileges to ensure safe and accurate diet orders. Implemented red tray mats and red swallow guides to ensure patient safety at mealtime.
 - Implemented the standardized *National Dysphagia Diet* at the Steward hospitals.
 - Participated in the Boston-area Dysphagia Rounds (2000 - current).
- Committees and task forces:
 - Researched hospital-acquired aspiration pneumonias and readmissions as a member of a patient safety task force within the Patient Care Assessment Committee (PCAC). Performed root-cause analysis as to why the rates of pneumonia and readmissions had increased. Presented findings and solutions.
 - Created a task force to develop a multidisciplinary hospital-wide Aspiration Precautions Policy, including oral hygiene protocols.
 - Lead the SLP Enterprise Group (6 Hospitals) to create the standardized SLP Meditech forms for our Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system. Achieved consensus on the creation of all inpatient and outpatient SLP forms. Participated in tests and launching in 2007. Lead revisions among the 6 hospitals. Produced documentation guidelines.
 - Participated in geriatric rounds on inpatients.
 - Member of Ethics Committee 2000-2013.

September 1999 – December 1999:

Speech-Language Pathologist. Full-time at Sunbridge of Weymouth Rehabilitation.

March 1999 – May 1999:

Speech-Language Pathologist. Per diem at skilled nursing facilities in Pittsfield and Dalton, MA. Optimum Rehabilitation.

January 1999 – May 1999:

Speech-Language Pathologist. Traveling therapist at skilled nursing facilities through Core Medical Group and Optimum Rehabilitation

Speech-Language Pathology CFY Supervisor. Supervised a speech-language pathologist's clinical fellowship year

March 1998 – January 1999:

Speech-Language Pathologist and CFY Supervisor. Willowood of Williamstown, MA. Mariner Health/Prism Rehab Systems. Acute respiratory rehab, specializing in tracheostomy and ventilator weaning.

June 1995 – June 1996:

Speech-Language Pathologist in Clinical Fellowship Year. Willowbrook Nursing and Rehab Center, Lake Mills, WI. Provided inpatient and outpatient services.

Fall 1994 – Spring 1995:

Speech-Language Pathology Intern. Internships at Highland Transitional Care, Madison, WI; ENT/Craniofacial Clinic at the University of Wisconsin Hospital, Madison.

Education

MS, Communicative Disorders – May 21, 1995: University of Wisconsin – Madison.

BS, Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology – May 15, 1993: Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Honors

- Graduated Summa Cum Laude with a 4.0 GPA from Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
- 7-time award winner of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's (ASHA) Award for Continuing Education (ACE) in recognition of continued professional study (as of June 2020).
- *Hormel Health Labs Hero.* This is an award that honors employees, consumers, and clinicians who are doing inspiring work in the field of dysphagia. In May 2019, I was the first recipient of this award. See article: <https://www.hormelhealthlabs.com/resources/health-hero-advances-dysphagia-research/>

Certifications / Licensure / Associations

- **Board Certified Specialist in Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders (BCS-S).** Obtained certification in 2012. Recertification obtained in July 2017 for another 5 years.
- ASHA Certificate of Clinical Competence – Speech-Language Pathology, March 1996-current.
- ASHA Member since 1995. Account number: 12005338.
- Licensed in Massachusetts since 3/3/98; number 4752; valid through 08/27/2022.
- Member of Special Interest Group 13: Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders (Dysphagia).
- Member of Dysphagia Research Society member, 2012-current.
- Member of National Foundation of Swallowing Disorders (NFOSD).
- Committee member (volunteer; invited position) serving on the Website, Communications, and Public Relations Committee (WCPRC) for the Dysphagia Research Society from May

2017-April 2020.

- Committee member (volunteer; invited position) serving on the Public Relations Committee of the American Board of Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders (ABSSD) from May 2018-current.
- Co-Chair of the Public Relations Committee of the American Board of Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders (ABSSD) from March 2020 for 2 years.

Presentations

- Invited speaker on dysphagia for the 44th Society of Otorhinolaryngology and Head-Neck Nurses (SOHN) Annual Congress & Nursing Symposium, September 11-14, 2020 in Boston, MA.
- Invited speaker for the Boston Area Dysphagia Grand Rounds, April 15, 2020. Speaking for speech-language pathologists on: “IDDSI Bitsy Steps: From Awareness to Adoption.” Postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic.
- Invited speaker for the ARKRAY USA Lunch & Education Program on March 19, 2020 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Title of presentation: “Pill Dysphagia & Case Studies Using a Novel Pill Swallowing Gel.” (Postponed/will reschedule due to cancellation of Dysphagia Research Society Annual Meeting due to COVID-19 pandemic.)
- Webinar for Summit Professional Education, recorded January 24, 2020: “**Medications: Drug-Induced Dysphagia, Complications, and Potential Treatments.**”
- Collaborated with BeckyDorner.com & HormelHealthLabs.com to create IDDSI Staff Training Modules (January, 2020). Presented two webinars: “Testing measures for food quality control and safety” and “Testing measures for beverage quality control and safety.”
- Invited speaker for the November 2019 meeting of the Massachusetts DHCC - Dietetics in Health Care Communities. Collaborating with 2 dietitians to present and provide hands-on lab on the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI).
- Invited speaker at the **40th annual Neurorehabilitation Conference** on Traumatic Brain Injury, Stroke, and other Neurologic Disorders in Cambridge, Massachusetts on November 17, 2019. Presenting: “**Medications: Drug-Induced Dysphagia, Complications, and Potential Treatments.**”
- “**Esophageal Dysphagia,**” presented at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (Beth Israel Lahey Health), July, 2019.
- “**International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI): The Who, Why, What & How.**” Live and broadcasted presentation and lab on May 22, 2019, assisting the Steward Health Care Network in implementation of IDDSI.
- Podcast with Fox Rehab (5/1/19): “**FOXCAST SLP: IDDSI – International Dysphagia Diet Standardization Initiative with Karen Sheffler.**” <https://www.foxrehab.org/podcast/foxcast-slp-iddsi-international-dysphagia-diet-standardization-initiative-karen-sheffler/>
- Presented at the NHAND Dysphagia Conference, Saturday, March 30, 2019. Provided a live version (4.5 hours) of my talk: “**International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI): The Who, Why, What & How,**” for the New Hampshire Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics (NHAND). The NHAND is a state affiliate of the national Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics (AND).
- “**IDDSI: Teamwork From Regulatory Requirements to Successful Implementation.**” Webinar presented on BeckyDorner.com on March 21, 2019, co-presenting with dietitian and long-term care nutrition expert: Brenda Richardson, MA, RDN, LD, CD, FAND.
- “**International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI): The Who, Why, What & How.**” (Live webinars for:
 - Becky Dorner & Associates - www.BeckyDorner.com, April 12, 2018;
 - Martin Bros. Distributing Co, Inc on October 10, 2018; and

- Nutritious Lifestyles® on May 13, 2019.
- **“Revolutionize the Gold-Standard! How About a New Platinum-Standard of Personalized Medicine for Instrumental Dysphagia Evaluations?”** (Session presented on November 17, 2018 at the national convention of the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association, Boston, MA).
- **“Dysphagia: Safety & Efficiency of Eating, Drinking & Taking Medications.”** (Invited speaker and panelist for session titled: “3D Printing of Pharmaceuticals and Biologics to Address Unmet Medical Needs,” at a *Summit Exploring 3D Printed Pharmaceuticals*, November 8, 2018, Livingston, NJ).
- **“What Every Therapist Needs to Know About Dysphagia: Swallowing Screening, Evaluation, and Treatment to Maximize Safety & Quality of Life.”** (for Summit Professional Education, traveling to present this live, one-day course around the country, in May, June & October of 2018. Now available online).
- **“What Do I See? Analyzing Interesting Videofluoroscopic Swallow Studies.”** (Live webinar for SpeechPathology.com/Continued.com, February 6, 2018).
- **“Videofluoroscopy: Safety & Efficiency and Underlying Structure & Physiology.”** (Live webinar for SpeechPathology.com, June 8, 2017).
- **International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) Presentations for Hormel Foods-Hormel Health Labs** (Live webinar April 2017; Live presentations in the Hormel booth at the Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo, Chicago, October, 2017; and Live presentation at a Navigator Meeting in Tampa, March 6, 2018)
- **“Medications & Eating and Swallowing Safely.”** Presented at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, 2016.
- Geriatric Conference 2015 at Newton-Wellesley Hospital: **“Preventing Hospital Acquired Aspiration Pneumonia: Simple Strategies that Save Lives.”** (10/30/15)
- Nutricia: Advance Medical Nutrition: **“Thickened Liquids: One Tool in Our Dysphagia Toolbox.”** (Live Webinar, 7/30/15. Recorded webinar on Nutricia Learning Center.)
- MGH Institute of Health Professions: **“Are You Ready for Dysphagia?”** (4-hour seminar to graduate students, 7/2/15)
- Tufts University Dental School: **“Speech-Language Pathology and the Dental Patient.”** (5/2013-12/2013 and 2/2016)
- 2011 ASHA National Convention in San Diego, CA: 2-hour seminar on **“Lateral Medullary Syndrome and Dysphagia: Literature Analysis and Case Studies.”** (11/18/11).
- PCAC presentation at Carney Hospital: **“Hospital Acquired Aspiration Pneumonia and Pneumonitis.”** (9/13/11)
- Noon Conference at Carney Hospital: **“Posterior Circulation Strokes”** (4/23/10).
- Noon Conference at Carney Hospital: **“Holistic Approach to Dysphagia: Not Just About Aspiration Anymore”** (1/29/09).
- Schwartz Rounds Presentation: **“Use of Tube Feeding in Patients with Dementia”** (2005).
- Many Noon Conferences on Role of SLP in acute care and on Dysphagia for the physicians, residents and house officers (2000-2013).
- NICHE (Nurses Improving Care for Health-system Elders) presentations to nurses (2013).

Publications (printed manuscripts only; does not include electronic publications)

Sheffler, K. (2018). The power of the toothbrush. *The ASHA Leader*, 23, 50-57. doi:10.1044/leader.FTR1.23052018.50 <https://leader.pubs.asha.org/article.aspx?articleid=2679429>

Areas of Interest and Special Skills

- Special training in **FEES** (Fiberoptic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing) with Kathy Fitzgerald, MS, CCC-SLP of SEC Medical Speech Pathology (9/2014 - 12/2014)
- **Patient safety** during hospitalizations and across the continuum of care. Public health initiatives in stroke. IDDSI Champion since 2014 (IDDSI.org is establishing a global consensus on dysphagia diets and liquid consistencies for patient safety through common terminology for all ages, in all care settings and across all cultures.)
- **Medical ethics.** End-of-life decision making. Hospice volunteer 1998 – 1999.
- **Leadership, education, and public speaking.** Founded and lead an environmental organization at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania (1990 – 1993).
- **Conflict resolution, facilitation, and consensus.** Part of team of founders/project managers to build a Cohousing neighborhood in Jamaica Plain with 30 residential units (2000-2005). Our community operates by consensus. Additionally, I trained meeting facilitation and conflict resolution at Madison Community Cooperative from September 1993 to June 1996 and ongoingly through where I reside at Jamaica Plain Cohousing. Organized conflict resolution/active-listening workshops for the Department of Communicative Disorders, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Languages

Proficient in Spanish. Volunteered in Mexico, Columbia, and Venezuela from 1996-1998.