

# HOT TOPICS IN MEDICAL SLP: DIALOGUE AND EMERGING CLINICAL TRENDS

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## **Learning Objectives:**

- Identify current trends and evidence-based practices in the assessment and treatment of speech, language, and swallowing disorders within acute and post-acute healthcare settings.
- Discuss how social determinants of health (SDOH), ethics, cultural factors, and medical documentation practices influence clinical decision-making, interprofessional collaboration, and equitable care delivery.
- Engage in collaborative dialogue with panelists and peers to develop strategies for advancing standardized, evidence-based, and well-documented practices that strengthen the visibility and impact of medical SLPs across Pennsylvania's healthcare systems.



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DR. RAJAPPA RECEIVES A FACULTY SALARY FROM EAST STROUDSBURG UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA. HER RESEARCH IS SUPPORTED BY FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (FPDC) GRANTS FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION (PASSHE). NON-FINANCIAL DISCLOSURES: DR. RAJAPPA SERVES AS VICE PRESIDENT FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE, SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY, FOR THE PENNSYLVANIA SPEECH-LANGUAGE-HEARING ASSOCIATION (PSHA). SHE IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE HEALTHCARE TELEPRACTICE COMMITTEE OF PSHA AND THE DYSPHAGIA RESEARCH SOCIETY (DRS)

TERESA DOES NOT HAVE ANY FINANCIAL DISCLOSURES RELATED TO THE MATERIAL BEING PRESENTED AND WILL RECEIVE NO COMPENSATION FOR MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS SEMINAR. NON-FINANCIAL DISCLOSURES: TERESA IS A PAID EMPLOYEE OF LVHN, PROUDLY PART OF JEFFERSON HEALTH AND IS A MEMBER OF PSHA'S HEALTHCARE AND TELEPRACTICE COMMITTEE.

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The background of the page features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue. These shapes create a modern, dynamic feel, with some areas appearing as sharp triangles and others as soft, flowing curves.

In Pennsylvania's dynamic healthcare landscape, medical speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are navigating increasingly complex clinical demands shaped by shorter hospital stays, diverse patient needs, evolving technologies, and time and reimbursement challenges. This panel brings together members and experts from the Healthcare and Telepractice Committees of the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association (PSHA) to discuss emerging and evolving trends in medical speech-language pathology across the Commonwealth. Panelists will provide an overview of current assessment practices for speech, language, and swallowing in acute healthcare settings; evidence-based treatment approaches and modalities supporting functional recovery; and the growing integration of social determinants of health (SDOH), ethics, and cultural responsiveness into clinical care. The discussion will also address documentation practices and their critical role in ensuring clinical accountability, interprofessional communication, and equitable care delivery. Designed as an interactive dialogue, this session invites participants to engage directly with panelists—sharing experiences, insights, and perspectives on the current and future direction of medical SLP practice in Pennsylvania. Together, the panel and attendees will explore how standardized, evidence-based, and equitable practices can enhance patient outcomes and strengthen the collective voice of medical SLPs serving Pennsylvanians affected by communication and swallowing disorders.

**Speaker's Bio:** Akila T. Rajappa, PhD, CCC-SLP, BCS-S is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the College of Health Sciences, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, USA. Her expertise spans clinical service, teaching, and research in dysphagia and dystussia, with a focus on evaluating evidence-based practice (EBP) and advancing health literacy and health communication initiatives for swallowing, speech, and cough rehabilitation in aging, stroke, and neurodegenerative disease populations. Dr. Rajappa is an American Board-Certified Specialist in Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders (BCS-S) and has extensive clinical experience across diverse medical settings. She is an active member of the Dysphagia Research Society (DRS) and the International Federation of Neurorehabilitation (IFNR). In addition to her academic and research roles, Dr. Rajappa serves on the advisory board of the South Asian Caucus of ASHA and currently holds the position of Vice President for Professional Practice, Speech-Language Pathology, in the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association (PSHA).

Staci L. Sorrell, MA, CCC-SLP is a full-time level 2 speech-language pathologist at Jefferson Health Torresdale Trauma Center in Philadelphia, PA. She has been a practicing clinician for almost 10 years across various medical settings. She is also an adjunct professor at her alma mater, West Chester University of Pennsylvania. Staci's clinical interests include dysphagia, trach and vent, and educating future clinicians. She is a member of the dysphagia research society (DRS), and is the 2025 chair elect for the Healthcare and Telepractice Committee of Pennsylvania Speech & Hearing Association (PSHA).

Teresa does not have any financial disclosures related to the material being presented and will receive no compensation for my participation in this seminar. Non-Financial Disclosures: Teresa is a paid employee of LVHN, proudly part of Jefferson Health and is a member of PSHA's Healthcare and Telepractice Committee.

**Speaker's Bio:** Veronica Croesus, MS, CCC-SLP is a practicing speech-language pathologist in acute care at Lehigh Valley Health Network in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. She received her Masters in Speech-Language Pathology from East Stroudsburg University in 2012. Veronica has presented at multiple continuing education courses on various topics related to delivery of SLP services and presented posters at PSHA Convention in 2024 and 2025. She is a member of PSHA's Healthcare Telepractice Committee. She is passionate about providing clinical supervision to graduate clinicians and serves as the rehabilitation clinical specialist of student programming for LVHN's rehabilitation department.

Nancy Carlino, MA., CCC-SLP is a practicing medical speech-language pathologist and retired associate professor and chair of the Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) department at Pennsylvania Western University. Nancy has worked for over 35 years as a medical speech-language pathologist in a variety of medical settings. She currently is a consulting speech-language pathologist in home health and rehabilitation settings. Nancy has presented at numerous state and national conferences and has co-authored two articles on clinical education. She is a past-President of the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association and a recipient of CSAP's Nancy McGinley award.

Caterina Staltari, M.A., CCC-SLP, is a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Speech-Language Pathology at Duquesne University. As a faculty member, she provides instruction for graduate and undergraduate students in academic and clinical courses. Professor Staltari has served on many university, state and professional committees to enhance the profession of Speech-Language Pathology more broadly. She received her Master's and Bachelor's Degrees in Communication Disorders from The University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Mrs. Staltari has extensive experience in clinical practice and supervision of both pediatric and adult populations with an emphasis on disorders of language, speech and cognition.