

In-between meeting SIG Swallowing and Communication

Date: 17th – 18th of November

Place: Nieuw Unicum – Zandvoort (NL)

Local organizers: Leonie Ruhaak (NL), Myrthe Hogebrink (NL), Caroline Bruggeman (NL)

Participants: Francesca De Biagi (IT), Leonie Ruhaak (NL), Myrthe Hogebrink (NL), Caroline Bruggeman (NL), Fredrik Sand (SW), Hilda Baeken (BE), Ingrid Theunkens (BE), Bregje Willems (NL), Anke Coerts (NL), Sofie Noe (BE), Hélène Mathy (BE), Marja Van Paassen (NL), Fleur Robbers (NL), Annejetske Dompeling (NL), Harja Habbink (NL), Selma Giling (NL)

Background

The SIG Communication and Swallowing in-between meeting took place in Zandvoort on 17th- 18th November 2016. It was organized by Leonie Ruhaak (NL), Myrthe Hogebrink (NL) and Caroline Bruggeman (NL), speech and language therapists at New Unicum (Zandvoort – NL), our host.

During the last year, as an activity of the SIG, an invitation letter was sent to speech and language therapists of different centres all around Europe in order to recruit more members and enlarge our small group. As a result, up to 17 participants registered to the meeting and some of them became new members of the SIG.

The topic of the reunion was decided in the previous in-between meeting held in Belgium in 2015. The purpose was to start a discussion on communication disorders and MS in order to develop new possible research on this topic.

Report of day one - 17th November 2016

The morning of the first day was aimed to provide a background both on cognition and communication disorders in MS. In this regard, the meeting started with an introductory presentation made by the neuropsychologist of the hosting centre (Larissa Meijer) on cognition in MS. Afterwards, the meeting went more into depth with the contribution of the SLT Bregje Willems (De Hoogstraat Revalidatie Center – Utrecht) who gave a speech on a screening tool to assess cognitive-communication problems. On the second part of the day, communication disorders in MS were discussed from two points of view. The SLT Fleur Robbers (Haka Ziekenhuis – Den Haag) presented a literature review on communication and language disorders in MS. Myrthe Hogebrink (New Unicum - Zandvoort) showed different case studies that raised a fruitful discussion between the participants of the meeting, focused on the assessment instruments available and the possible implication for treatments.

Report of day two - 18th November 2016

The second day of the meeting started with the SLT Leonie Ruhaak (New Unicum - Zandvoort) who updated the SIG on the running project granted by RIMS in 2015. This multicentre project involves 8 centers in 4 different countries (Belgium, Holland, Spain and Chile). It is aimed to the translation and the validation of an Italian screening tool (DYMUS; Bergamaschi et al., 2008) for dysphagia in MS into two languages (Dutch and Spanish). Due to some delays caused by different events (acceptance by the ethic committee, participants changing...), not all of the centres have already enrolled the number of patients required. However, the project should be concluded by the end of the current year. Any preliminary results were already done.

The following intervention was also conducted by the SLT Leonie Ruhaak and it was aimed to formulate a possible research question concerning communication and MS. After a brief introduction on the methodology, participants were divided into 3 small groups in order to design a research project on the matter. Different ideas were presented:

- Validation of the cognitive communication screening in MS.

- An f-MRI study in cognitive communication in MS.
- Validation of a test battery in cognitive communication in MS.

A plenary discussion of the research project followed.

The meeting ended with a presentation made by the co-chair of the SIG, Francesca De Biagi (Hospital San Camillo, Venice – IT). After a brief recapitulation on the nature of the group and its previous activities, questions were raised about the future plans of the SIG, in light of the themes discussed during the meeting. Given the common feeling of a lack of clear information about communication and language troubles in MS, the group decided to proceed with a systematic review on the matter. This project should be accomplished during the following year under the guidance and coordination of the SLT Leonie Ruhaak. The SIG also decided to discuss the results of this review on the next in-between meeting, that should be planned within one year, on a location to be defined, but likely in Overpelt, Belgium.

At the end of the meeting election for the chair and co-chair of the SIG were performed with the following results:

- **Chair: SLT Leonie Ruhaak (New Umicum, Zandvoort - NL)**
- **Co-chair: SLT Francesca De Biagi (Hospital San Camillo, Venice – IT).**