

International Conference on

# Speech Language Pathology

May 22-23, 2017 Las Vegas, USA

## Feeding techniques and practices for children with disabilities living outside of permanent family care around the globe

Maureen Dykinga  
SPOON, USA

Feeding techniques that are considered best practice and assist infants and children with disabilities (CWD) to remain safe during mealtimes have been studied in the United States. What is less well understood is how applying best feeding practices to those living in institutional care around the globe has a positive impact on health and nutrition indicators. Unsafe feeding practices and respiratory health issues are frequently observed in these settings and SPOON has collected nutrition data that shows high rates of wasting, stunting and anemia in this population. In order to better understand the relationship between feeding practices and health/nutrition indicators, SPOON developed a feeding assessment tool to assist with training and act as a guided observation that leads to recommended interventions that address feeding practices including positioning, pacing, responsiveness and texture modification. Paper versions were reviewed, modified and integrated into a smart digital application (app) that assesses mealtime practices and uses built-in logic to customize the assessment. SPOON's work in the field has taught us that addressing feeding or nutrition practices in isolation is not as effective as integrating these interventions and this is a primary feature of the digital app. The data collected will be used to monitor health and nutrition indicators and correlate these to the change in feeding practices during mealtime. Contributing to this body of knowledge and increasing our understanding of the impact that feeding practices have on health and nutrition, for infants and CWD living in institutional care around the globe is critical.

### Biography

Maureen Dykinga has completed her Master of Science degree in Communication Disorders from Arizona State University, USA. After providing pediatric clinical care in her own private practice for 13 years, she expanded her scope of work to include infants and children around the globe, by becoming the Feeding and Disability Specialist at SPOON, an NGO that specializes in feeding and nutrition for children living outside of permanent family care.

maureen@spoonfoundation.org

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