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OPEN PEER REVIEW

Effects of Rehabilitative Exercises on Swallowing Function in Elderly People: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial

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About this report

This open peer review (OPR) report shows the public comments made on this article during peer review, by the reviewers, the associate editor and the editor-in-chief, for every revision round, together with the authors' replies. Comments appear only with the consent of the people who wrote them. Reviewers who chose to sign their report are named; the others are shown as "Referee". Comments are edited for language only, and confidential remarks to the editors are not included.

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1 Original submission

4 comments · 17 Aug 2022 – 22 Aug 2022

Referee 1 Reviewer

MAJOR REVISION 17 Aug 2022

Comments on “Effects of Rehabilitative Exercises on Swallowing Function in Elderly People: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial”
The study investigated the effects of rehabilitative exercises on swallowing function in older adults. This is a pilot randomized controlled trial and an interesting study. I provide some comments and suggestions to improve the manuscript.

Abstract
- The aim of the study should be moved to the method section according to the instructions for authors.
- The number of participants and the sample size in each group should be mentioned.
- It would be better to add the eligibility criteria for participants.
- The authors may consider adding the randomization process to the method section, i.e., how were participants allocated to interventions?
- It seems that this part, “ in three sets????”, should be deleted from the sentence: “Participants underwent rehabilitative exercises for perioral muscles, tongue muscles, & infrahyoid and suprahyoid muscles, in three sets????”.
- The abstract should be short and informative. There seems to be no need to mention the muscle groups in this section. It is enough to mention only rehabilitation exercises.
- The authors may consider adding the blinding (masking) procedure.
- In general, there are several incomplete phrases and sentences in this section. This sentence should be edited grammatically: “Outcome measures in this study were scores, using”.
- - It should be mentioned which outcome variable each tool is used to measure.
- There is no need to mention the software used. This sentence, “ in the analysis Data were analyzed by proper statistical tests on SPSS-22”, should be omitted.
- The conclusion section contains redundant parts: “….can be improved with
a swallowing rehabilitation program …”. It is better to express the conclusion in the form of a single sentence with embedded clauses.
- Please check the keywords against MeSH.
Introduction
- Please use the same font throughout the body of the paper. P.5, line 38

- This sentence, “ However, it is the first time that the effectiveness of rehabilitative exercises on swallowing muscles was studied on healthy elders”, should be moved to the section on importance and necessity.

- The authors used the term “oropharyngeal dysphagia” in the abstract; it is surprising that there is no mention of swallowing phases in the introduction section.

- The research background should also refer to the supporting evidence.

- What happened to the last sentence of the introduction? “Evaluate the combined effect of four different rehabilitative exercises in treating”

- Previous studies that have investigated the effect of each exercise used in the present study, individually or in any combination, should be mentioned.

Method

- The phrase "no history" is redundant in the inclusion criteria. This section should be edited.

- Regarding the fifth criterion, it seems unnecessary to mention the test used here, “Persian Northwestern Dysphagia Patient Check Sheet”, for the initial identification of participants.

- It is not mentioned which tool was used to check the inclusion criteria. Did you use the demographic information form?

- The process of identifying and inviting participants and the explanations provided to them should be fully explained.

- The authors pointed out that the rehabilitative exercises were selected to strengthen muscles. Why didn't you use any tests to measure strength, range of motion, or tongue mobility before and after the intervention?

Randomization
- It seems that the second “group” is redundant in these sentences: “ group 1 who received 89 the rehabilitative exercises group” and “group 2 who received the usual care and
90 compensatory methods group”.
- The authors must be consistent in their use of the terms “clinicians” and “therapist”. Was there one or more than one?
Intervention
-The protocol for providing rehabilitation exercises should be explained more clearly.
-The basis for choosing the type of exercises, their duration, and their dosage should be specified.
-The underlying rationale for investigating the combined effect of the exercises should be explicitly mentioned. Why is the effect of each exercise not examined? Has the effect of each exercise with the same delay and dosage been investigated in previous studies? Which assessment tool determined that each participant needed all of these exercises?
-It should be clearly explained how the participants were convinced to cooperate in this intensive treatment, especially since they did not have any specific complaints and were not selected from among patients who were referred to the clinic.
-I think it would be better to revise the description of the rehabilitative exercise program for clarity. It might be better to present it as a guideline in the appendix (including subclass exercises and instructions) or in another way that increases clarity.
-It should be pointed out which tongue, mouth, infrahyoid, and suprahyoid muscles are involved in the exercises, as was done for the perioral exercises.
-You have mentioned that each participant must perform 3 sets of actions in the morning, afternoon, and evening, and elsewhere you said that the treatments were provided by the therapist. This issue should be clarified.
-If the participants were doing the exercises at home, how were the process of teaching the exercises to the patient, their execution, and their continuation monitored?
- You should be consistent in the use of italics: “Perioral muscles strengthening exercises:”
- The authors must be consistent in their use of the terms “the speech pathologist”, “the therapist”, and “A speech and language pathologist”.
- The authors mentioned “the number of therapeutic sessions were similar to those of group 1”. This means that the participants visited the clinic only to receive usual care and recommendations for safe swallowing for 20 sessions. It should be clearly explained how the participants were convinced.
- The characteristics of each tool, its purpose, its scoring, and its psychological characteristics should be noted.
- You have mentioned improvement in “the quality of life” in the abstract section, but you have not mentioned which tool was used to examine this construct.
- It seems that this sentence should be removed: "the main measures used to evaluate the outcomes were these two later scales."

Results

- It seems that the first two lines of the results section do not belong in this section: " The present study evaluated the effectiveness of rehabilitative exercises on groups of muscle 136 related to swallowing function. Two groups received different types of treatments as explained in previous sections".
- The authors have provided age and gender information in Table 1. Are clinical characteristics missing?
-This sentence should be edited grammatically: " The swallowing function was compared before the intervention was initiated".
-It would be better to present the screening results using the Persian version of North-western Dysphagia Patient Check Sheet.
-This sentence, "The measures were scores on MASA & DHI", should be edited.
- Please check how to insert table footnotes according to the journal's instructions for authors. Should different numbers of stars be used for each word?
- The p-values are not mentioned in the analysis of dysphagia severity and aspiration severity in terms of the MASA test (Table 4 & 5).

Discussion

-The authors have mentioned "reduction of the severity of dysphagia and the frequency of aspiration". It is unclear to me which instrument was used to measure these two outcomes. Does the instrument have subscales?
- The authors have mentioned the results of a study that used the IQoro. It is not enough to give only the name of the device!
-These sentences should be edited grammatically: "For example, in Hagglund et al 's study (2019), after five weeks 31% 163 in the experimental group achieved normal swallowing by applying timed water swallow test" and "Since these studies undertook only one exercise to intervene, it may look more economic, but, such specific instruments are not available for all patients and the percentage of improved patients was 166 about one fourth of all participants in five weeks".
- The authors must be consistent in their use of the terms "tongue exercise" and "Lingual exercise".
- It seems unnecessary to mention the test: "by applying timed water swallow test only one exercise".
-Please use the same font throughout the body of the paper. P.9, line 178.
-It seems that the discussion should be further expanded to address consistent and inconsistent research results.
-The authors have mentioned "Yoon et al (2014) performed two rehabilitative exercises for four weeks." Which two exercises were considered?
-This sentence should be edited grammatically: " Robbins et al. (2005) participants were healthy elders (age between 70 to 89".
- It seems that this sentence was randomly placed at the end of the discussion: "Rehabilitative exercises also re-train and strengthen the neuromuscular systems by applying the principles of neuroplasticity".

Limitation

- It seems the authors forgot to complete this section!

Conflict of interest

- The authors have pointed out that there was no conflict of interest. Did any of the authors serve as a reviewer or as a member of the journal's editorial board?

References

It seems that some references are incomplete: 14 and 20. Please check all references according to the journal's instructions for authors.

Referee 2 Reviewer

MAJOR REVISION 20 Aug 2022

Thank you for submitting "Effects of Rehabilitative Exercises on Swallowing Function in Elderly People: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial" to the Middle East Journal of Rehabilitation and Health Studies.
Please consider the following issues:
- The sentences in the first paragraph of the introduction are scattered. There is no meaningful connection between the sentences. The reader is confused about the author's focus on dysphagia, presbyphagia, and. . ..
- Line 57 is incomplete: "Evaluate the combined effect of four different rehabilitative exercises in treating. . .."
- Although the author has tried to introduce the research topic, the necessity of conducting the research has not been clearly stated.
- The inclusion criteria section mentions "presence of signs and symptoms of oropharyngeal dysphagia according to Persian Northwestern Dysphagia Patient Check Sheet (P-NDPCS)", but it is not clear whether the author intends to exclude people with dysphagia or not. Although this issue was mentioned in line 83, the reason for excluding elderly people with dysphagia was not specified.
- It is necessary to pay attention to writing conventions, such as the use of periods. For example, in line 90, two periods were placed at the end of the sentence, and the sentence in line 92 had no period.
- Has the setting of the intervention not been mentioned?
- Who performed the interventions in the two groups? What was their specialty, and how many years of experience did they have?
- The assessment tools are not accurately described. Are these tools valid and reliable in Iran?
- Was a specific demographic questionnaire used? What items were included?
- The study should be conducted in accordance with CONSORT. Please read it and add the CONSORT sampling flowchart.
- In the discussion, you should explain how your study differs from previous studies and compare your results with theirs. What were the gaps in the previous studies? What has your study added to the body of literature?
- Please state the implications of your research for rehabilitation and your suggestions for future research.
- In the limitations section, you mentioned that there were several limitations, but only two were mentioned. Explain "low awareness about dysphagia among the elders". Why was the process difficult? What was the reason for their reluctance to participate? What are your suggestions for addressing these limitations?

Associate Editor

MAJOR REVISION 21 Aug 2022

Dear author/s;
Thanks for submitting "Effects of Rehabilitative Exercises on Swallowing Function in Elderly People: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial" to the Middle East Journal of Rehabilitation and Health Studies. Your manuscript was carefully read by the reviewers. As the reviewers mentioned, there are concerns regarding your manuscript. It is recommended that you carefully address these concerns and revise the manuscript based on the reviewers' comments.
1. The manuscript has numerous issues related to language quality, including mechanics and style (mechanics and style cover issues like capitalization, hyphenation, punctuation, spacing, etc.), readability suggestions (readability suggestions cover issues like conciseness, redundancy, transitions, and flow, and suggest improved phrasing), vocabulary (vocabulary covers issues like fluency, formality, and word choice), and writing errors (writing errors cover issues like article usage, conjunctions, determiner errors, grammar, preposition usage, spelling, and unclear phrasing). The entire text must be edited by a native English speaker, and a certificate must be provided.
2. As you know, the abstract is an important part of an article. Unfortunately, the abstract is full of errors and

should be fundamentally revised. Please use the special CONSORT checklist for writing abstracts of randomized trials that is uploaded on the journal's website.
3. An important point in your study is the ethical challenge of not providing the intervention to the control group, whose members had signs and symptoms of swallowing problems. How do you justify this issue? Please state your justification clearly.
4. Unfortunately, the details in the method section are not described correctly, including the study design, the number of people providing the intervention, the schedule for providing face-to-face and direct intervention, and how exercises are performed and controlled at home. Please use the CONSORT checklist for writing randomized trials that is uploaded on the journal's website.
5. Intervention methods, especially those for the control group and perioral muscle strengthening exercises, were not explained in detail. Please add more information. If needed, add an appendix including detailed instructions for the treatment protocol.
6. Add the CONSORT flow diagram.
7. Which version of SPSS did you use: 19 or 22?
8. The statistical analyses used in the study are very simple. Please use advanced statistical analyses appropriate to pretest-posttest control group designs.
9. Add the following statements: 1) authors' contributions, 2) data access statement, 3) mention in the conflict of interest statement that two authors are husband and wife and that some authors are associate editors of the MEJRHS.
10. The titles of the tables should be clear and concise. Please rewrite them again.

Best regards

Editor-in-Chief

MAJOR REVISION 22 Aug 2022

Dear Authors
Based on the reviewers' and associate editor's comments, your article needs major revision. When revising your manuscript, please consider all issues mentioned in the reviewers' comments carefully: please outline every change made in response to their comments and submit the required files.

2

Revision 1

AUTHORS' RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS

Authors' reply to reviewers

The next pages contain the authors' point-by-point reply to the comments of this revision round, as submitted with the revised manuscript. It is published as the authors wrote it.

Dear Dr. Ehsani

Editors-in-Chief of Middle East Journal of Rehabilitation and Health Studies (MEJRH)

Hello

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit a revised draft of our manuscript titled:'' Effects of Rehabilitative Exercises on Swallowing Function in Elderly People: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial "to the Middle East Journal of Rehabilitation and Health Studies (MEJRH)
We appreciate you and the reviewers for your precious time in reviewing our paper and providing valuable comments. It was your valuable and insightful comments that led to possible improvements in the current version. The authors have carefully considered the comments and tried our best to address every one of them. We hope the manuscript after careful revisions meet your high standards.
We attached the point-by-point responses. All modifications in the manuscript have been highlighted in blue.

H.A

Point-By-Point Response to Reviewer’s Concerns

	Comment from Reviewer	Response
1	The aim of the study should be transferred to the method section according to the authors’ instructions.	Following the reviewer's comment, it is revised and highlighted in blue in text.
2	It should be mentioned the number of participants and sample size in each group.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
3	It seems to be better to add the eligibility criteria for participants.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
4	Authors may consider adding a randomization process to method section .i.e. How participants were allocated to interventions?	Thank you for pointing this out, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
5	It seems that this part “ in three sets????” should be deleted from the sentence: ”Participants underwent rehabilitative exercises for perioral muscles, tongue muscles, & infrahyoid and suprahyoid muscles, in three sets????”.	Thank you for your comment, it is removed and highlighted in blue in text.
6	The abstract should be short and informative. It seems to be no need to mention the muscle groups in this section. It is enough to mention only rehabilitation exercises.	Many thanks for your valuable comment.it are revised in text, and it is highlighted in blue in text
7	Authors may consider adding the blinding (masking) procedure.	Thank you for your suggestion, it is done in the text.
8	In general, there are several incomplete phrase and sentences in this section. This sentence should be edited grammatically “Outcome measures in this study were scores, using”	Following the reviewer's comment, it is revised and highlighted in blue in text.
9	It should be mentioned that each tool is used for measuring which outcome variable.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is added and highlighted in blue in text.
10	There is no need to mention the used software. This sentence ” in the analysis Data were analyzed by proper statistical tests on SPSS-22” should be omitted.	Thank you for your comment, it is removed and highlighted in blue in text
11	The conclusion section contains redundant parts “….can be improved with a swallowing rehabilitation program …”. It is better to express the conclusion in the form of a single sentence with embedded clauses.	Many thanks for your valuable comment.it are revised in text, and it is highlighted in blue in text
12	Please check keywords according to Mesh.	Thank you for your suggestion, it is done in the text.

13	Please use the same font throughout the body of paper. P.5, line 38	Thank you for your suggestion, it is done in the text.
14	This sentence “ However, it is the first time that the effectiveness of rehabilitative exercises on swallowing muscles was studied on healthy elders” should be transferred to the section of importance and necessity.	Thank you for your suggestion, it is done in the text.
15	The authors used the “oropharyngeal dysphagia” term in the abstract, it is surprising that there is no mention of swallowing phases in the introduction section.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
16	It should also refer to the supporting evidence in the background of the research.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
17	What happened to the last sentence of the introduction? Evaluate the combined effect of four different rehabilitative exercises in treating	Many thanks for your valuable comment.it are revised in text, and it is highlighted in blue in text
18	It should be mentioned to the previous studies that have investigated the effect of each exercise used in the present study individually or with any combination.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
19	The phrase "no history" is redundant in the inclusion criteria. This section should be edited.	Thank you for your comment, it is removed and highlighted in blue in text.
20	Regarding the fifth criterion, it seems unnecessary to mention the test used here “Persian Northwestern Dysphagia Patient Check Sheet “for the initial identification of participants.	Thank you for your comment, it is removed and highlighted in blue in text.
21	It is not mentioned what tool was used to check the inclusion criteria. Did you use the demographic information form?	Thank you for pointing this out, it is added and highlighted in blue in text. Yes the tools have demographic section.
22	It should be fully explained the process of identifying and inviting participants and the explanations provided to them.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
23	The authors pointed out those rehabilitative exercises were selected to strengthen muscles. Why didn't you use any tests to measure strength, range of motion or tongue mobility before and after the intervention?	Thank you for pointing this out, the aim of this study was to determine the effects of this exercise on swallowing function as the main outcome measure.
23	It seems that the second “group” is redundant in these sentence” group 1 who received 89 the rehabilitative exercises group” and “group 2 who received the usual care and 90 compensatory methods group”.	Thank you for your comment, it is removed and highlighted in blue in text

24	Authors must be consistent in use of terms “clinicians” or “therapist”.one or more?	Thank you for your comment, it is removed and highlighted in blue in the text
25	The protocol for providing rehabilitation exercises should be explained more clearly.	Thank you for your comment, it is explained and highlighted in blue in the text
26	It should be determined on what basis the type of exercises, its duration and dosage have been chosen.	Thank you for your comment The type of all exercise is isometric and the duration and dosage of exercises were on base on previous studies in dysphagia therapy.
27	It should be explicitly mentioned the underlying rationale for investigating the combined effect of exercises. Why is the effect of each exercise not examined? Has the effect of each exercise with the same delay and dosage been investigated in previous studies? Which assessment tool determined that each participant needed all of these exercises?.	Thank you for your comment, because swallowing is a process that includes the groups of muscles from mouth to stomach we aimed to examine combined exercises to evaluate their effects on the swallowing process.
28	-It should be clearly explained how the participants were convinced to cooperate in this intensive treatment. Especially since they did not have any specific complaints and were not selected from among the patients who referred to the clinic.	Thank you for your comment Most elderly people are unaware of dysphagia and with an assessment, we diagnose dysphagia in this group.
29	I think is better to revise the form of writing the rehabilitative exercises program for more clarity. It might be better to put it in the form of a guideline in the appendix (including subclass exercises and instructions) or any way for increasing clarity.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is added and highlighted in blue in the text
30	It should be pointed out which tongue, mouth, infrahyoid and suprahyoid muscles are involved in exercises as mentioned for perioral exercises.	Thank you for your comment. It is not common in dysphagia rehabilitation exercises and we have no evidence for this and need more research about this subject. These muscles are very small and as an organ like the tongue, they are effective in swallowing, and these exercises together strengthen the set of these muscles.
31	-You have mentioned that the each participant must perform 3 sets of actions in the morning, afternoon, and evening, and elsewhere you said that the treatments were provided by the therapist. This issue should be clarified.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is corrected and highlighted in blue in the text

32	If the participants have been doing the exercises at home, How was the process of teaching the exercises to the patient and monitoring their execution and the continuation of the exercises checked?.	Thank you for pointing this out. rehabilitation exercises were performed by a speech and language pathologist.
33	You should be consistent in the use of italics “Perioral muscles strengthening exercises:”	Thank you for your comment. it is corrected
34	Authors must be consistent in use of terms “the speech pathologist” or “the therapist” or “A speech and language pathologist”.	Thank you for your comment it is corrected.
35	Authors mentioned “the number of therapeutic sessions were similar to those of group 1”. This means that the participants visited the clinic only to receive usual care and recommendations for safe swallowing for 20 session. It should be clearly explaind how the participants were convinced.	Thank you for your comment it is corrected.
36	It should be noted the characteristics of each tool, aim of use, scoring and its psychological characteristics.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
37	you have mentioned improvement in “the quality of life” in the abstract section, but you have not mentioned which tool was used to examine this construct.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
38	It seems that this sentence should be removed: "the main measures used to evaluate the outcomes were these two later scales."	Thank you for your comment, it is removed and highlighted in blue in the text
39	It seems that the first two lines of the results section do not belong to this section :” The present study evaluated the effectiveness of rehabilitative exercises on groups of muscle 136 related to swallowing function. Two groups received different types of treatments as explained in previous sections	Thank you for your comment, it is removed and highlighted in blue in the text
40	The authors have provided age and gender information in Table 1. Are clinical characteristics missed?	Following the reviewer's comment, it is revised and highlighted in blue in text.
41	This sentence should be edited grammatically:” The swallowing function was compared before the intervention was initiated”	Following the reviewer's comment, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text.
42	It seems better to present the results of the screening with the Persian version of North-western Dysphagia Patient Check Sheet.	Thank you for your comment, but we used this screening test only before starting the intervention for all elderly people and it was not the main outcome measure of our study

43	This sentence “The measures were scores on MASA & DHI” should be edited.	Following the reviewer's comment, it is revised and highlighted in blue in text.
44	Please check how to insert table footnotes according to the authors’ instructions of the journal. Is it in the form of using different number of stars for each word?	Following the reviewer's comment, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text.
45	the P-values are not mentioned in analysis of dysphagia severity and aspiration severity in terms of the MASA test (Table 4 & 5).	Thank you for pointing this out, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
46	Authors have mentioned “reduction of the severity of dysphagia and the frequency of aspiration”. It is unclear to me that these two results are the result of measuring with which instrument. Does the instrument have subscales?	Following the reviewer's comment, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text.
47	The authors have mentioned the results of a study that used the IQoro. It is not enough to be satisfied with the name of device!	Thank you for pointing this out, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
48	-These sentences should be edited grammatically: “For example, in Hagglund et al ‘s study (2019), after five weeks 31% 163 in the experimental group achieved normal swallowing by applying timed water swallow test”. And “Since these studies undertook only one exercise to intervene, it may look more economic, but, such specific instruments are not available for all patients and the percentage of improved patients was 166 about one fourth of all participants in five weeks”.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
49	Authors must be consistent in use of term “tongue exercise” or “Lingual exercise”.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
50	It seems unnecessary to pointed out to the test “by applying timed water swallow test only one exercise”	Thank you for pointing this out, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
51	Please use the same font throughout the body of paper. P.9, line 178.	Thank you for pointing this out it is removed and highlighted in blue in the text
52	It seems that the discussion should be further expanded according to the consistent and nonconsistent research results.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
53	Authors have mentioned “Yoon et al (2014) performed two rehabilitative exercises for four weeks.” Which two exercises were considered?.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
54	This sentence should be edited grammatically:” Robbins et al. (2005) participants were healthy elders (age between 70 to 89	Thank you for pointing this out, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text

55	It seems that this sentence was randomly placed at the end of the discussion: “Rehabilitative exercises also re-train and strengthen the neuromuscular systems by applying the principles of neuroplasticity”.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
56	Limitation - It semms the authors forgot to complete this section!	Thank you for pointing this out, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
57	Conflict of interest - The authors have pointed out that there was no conflict of interest. Did none of the authors have the role of a reviewer or are they not a member of editorial board of journal?	Thank you for pointing this out, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
58	References It seems some references are incomplete: 14 and 20. Please check all of refreces according to the authors’ instructions of journal	Thank you for pointing this out, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
	Reviewer 2:	
1	The sentences in the first paragraph of the introduction are scattered. There is no meaningful coordination between the sentences. The audience gets confused that the author is focused on dysphagia, Presbyphagia and…	Thank you for pointing this out, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
2	Line 57 is incomplete "Evaluate the combined effect of four different rehabilitative exercises in treating…."	Thank you for pointing this out, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
3	Although the author has tried to raise the topic of research, but the necessity of conducting research has not been well and clearly stated.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
4	It was mentioned in the inclusion criteria section: "presence of signs and symptoms of oropharyngeal dysphagia according to Persian Northwestern Dysphagia Patient Check Sheet (P-NDPCS)", but it is not clear whether the author intends to exclude people with dysphagia or not. Although this issue was mentioned in line 83, the reason for removing the elderly with dysphagia was not determined.	Thank you for pointing this out, it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
5	It is necessary to pay attention to the principles of writing, such as the dot... For example, in line 90, two dot were placed at the end of the sentence, and in the sentence of line 92, there was no dot.	Following the reviewer's comment, , it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text

6	The setting of the intervention was not mentioned?	Following the reviewer's comment, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
6	Who did the interventions in the two groups? With what specialty and how many years of experience?	Thank you for pointing this out, the intervention was done by two speech therapists with 3 years of experiences.
7	Assessment tools are not accurately introduced? Are these tools valid and reliable in Iran?	Following the reviewer's comment, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
8	Was a specific demographic questionnaire used? What items were included?	Thank you for pointing this out, we used of demographic section in two main tools, including, gender, and rewiv of medical records in health center.
9	Study should be done based on the CONSORT. Please read it and add CONSORT sampling flowchart.	Following the reviewer's comment, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
10	In the discussion, you should say what is the difference between you and previous studies and compare your results with them. What were the gaps of the previous studies? What has your study added to the body of the literature?	Following the reviewer's comment, , it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
11	Please state the Implications of your research for rehabilitation and your suggestions for future research.	Following the reviewer's comment, , it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
12	- In the limitations section, you mentioned that there were several limitations, but only two were mentioned. Explain "low awareness about dysphagia among the elders". Why was the process difficult? What was the reason for their reluctance to participate? What are the suggestions for these restrictions?	Following the reviewer's comment, , it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text

	Associate Editor's Comments:	
1	The manuscript has numerous issues related to the language quality including, mechanics and style (Mechanics and style covers issues like capitalization, hyphenation, punctuation, spacing etc.), readability suggestions (Readability suggestions covers issues like conciseness, redundancy, transition and flow, and suggests improved phrasing.), vocabulary (Vocabulary covers issues like fluency, formality, and word choice.), and writing errors (Writing errors covers issues like article usage, conjunctions, determiner errors, grammar, preposition usage, spelling, and unclear phrasing.). The entire text must be edited by a native English-speaker along with providing a certificate.	Following the reviewer's comment, , it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
2	. As you know the abstract is an important part of an article. Unfortunately, the abstract is full of errors that should be fundamentally revised. Please use the special CONSORT checklist for writing the abstract of randomized trials that is uploaded on the journal's website.	Following the reviewer's comment, , it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
3	An important point in your study is the ethical challenge of not providing the intervention to the control group who had signs and symptoms of swallowing problems. How do you justify this issue? Please state clearly.	Thank you for pointing this out, as you know management of dysphagia is using two strategies: compensatory and rehabilitative. in the other hand, the participants in two groups received two different strategies.
4	Unfortunately, the details in the method section are not mentioned correctly. Including: study design, number of people providing the intervention, scheduling of providing face-to-face and direct intervention, how to do and control exercises at home? Please use the CONSORT checklist for writing the randomized trials that is uploaded on the journal's website.	Following the reviewer's comment, , it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text
5	. intervention methods specially for control group and perioral muscles strengthening exercises were not explained in detail. Please add more information. If needed add an appendix including detailed instruction of treatment protocol.	Following the reviewer's comment, , it is revised and highlighted in blue in the text

6	Add the CONSORT flow diagram.	Following the reviewer's comment, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
7	Which version of SPSS did you use? 19 or 22?	Following the reviewer's comment, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
8	. The statistical analyses used in the study are very simple. Please use the advanced statistical analyses appropriate to the pretest-posttest control group designs.	Following the reviewer's comment, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
9	Add the following statements: 1) authors contributions, 2) data access statement, 3) Mentioning the family relationship of two authors together (husband and wife) and that some authors are associated editors of the MEJRHS in the conflict of interest	Following the reviewer's comment, it is added and highlighted in blue in text
10	. The titles of the tables should be clear and concise. Please rewrite them again.	Following the reviewer's comment, it is added and highlighted in blue in the text.

2 Revision 1

5 comments · 11 Oct 2022 – 19 Oct 2022

Referee 3 Reviewer — ACCEPT 11 Oct 2022

I believe the paper is clearer and easier to follow now. I only note that the authors have introduced the acronym “QOL” twice in the discussion section. They should introduce the “QOL” acronym after the first use of its full term in the text.

Referee 2 Reviewer — ACCEPT 15 Oct 2022

All my concerns were addressed - thank you.

Referee 4 Reviewer — ACCEPT 17 Oct 2022

Dear author/s,
I read your manuscript carefully. All my concerns were addressed. In my opinion, your manuscript is ready to be accepted for publication in MJRHS.
best regards

Associate Editor — ACCEPT 17 Oct 2022

Dear author/s,
I read your manuscript carefully. You have correctly applied the corrections to the manuscript based on the reviewers' comments, and now your manuscript is ready to be accepted by MJRHS.
Best regards

Editor-in-Chief — ACCEPT 19 Oct 2022

Dear Authors
We are pleased to inform you that your article is accepted for publication in the MEJRHS. We hope to receive other high-quality articles from your group.