

Crushing Meds : What's a SLP to do?

Special guest: Amanda Weissberg M.S., CCC-SLP

Amanda Weissberg graduated with her Bachelor's and Master's from California State University, Northridge in Los Angeles. She has worked for the last three and a half years across the continuum from a skilled nursing facility, sub-acute facility, outpatient, acute rehab, and inpatient/critical care settings. She most recently works per-diem at an acute care hospital in Los Angeles. Amanda volunteers on the Dysphagia Outreach Project Public Relations Social Media Team and is an affiliate member of the MedSLP Collective. Additionally, she created the Instagram platform, @millennialmedslp to help spread evidence-based practice, education, and to continue her own growth.

Inside this episode:

Trouble swallowing pills is one of the most common complaints from our patients with dysphagia. While we may have the best intentions by recommending something to make pills go down easier, we can actually create more harm than good if we are not educated about the different medication delivery modes. Amanda Weissberg has made it her mission to spread awareness about this topic. She's here to talk about crushing meds, collaborating with pharmacy, and the resources available to empower SLPs when it comes to pill dysphagia.

Amanda did a poll on her Instagram about pill crushing and the results were very interesting! This is what sparked her interest in researching this topic further...

She asked the following questions:

Do you recommend crushed meds?

85% said yes, 15% said no

Do you consult the pharmacy?

43% said yes, 57% said no

Do you take into mind efficacy of medication when recommending a mode of pill delivery?

68% said yes, 32% said no



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- The concept of Bioavailability
 - Bioavailability is the proportion of a drug or other substance which enters the circulation when introduced into the body and so is able to have an active effect
 - When we crush and mix meds, we effect bioavailability
 - For example, mixing some complex antibiotics with dairy (ice cream) may prevent absorption and reduce bioavailability
 - Cornstarch and gum based thickeners are polymers and they chemically and physically bind with crushed medication to cause a significant reduction in the way the medication is absorbed
- It is important to be educated about the available options for medication delivery modes
 - (IV, liquid, time released, powder, etc.) so that you can describe things in your recommendations and make appropriate pharmacy consults
 - For example, Potassium tablets are very common in acute care hospitals, but they are very large and often problematic for our patients with dysphagia
 - There are alternatives like KCl powder that could be mixed with applesauce
 - Collaborate with your pharmacy colleagues to learn more about safe medication delivery
 - Consider the whole medical picture
- To test medication delivery modes in our instrumental swallow studies, you can use barium tablets under fluoro or something like M&Ms during FEES
- Resources to start learning about crushing meds:
 - Phasix is a company that provides a special liquid for medication delivery
 - it is more than 80% water and uses a gel-based chemistry that adheres to the medication keeping it slippery and smooth from the mouth to the stomach, reducing the likelihood that a pill will get stuck during swallowing
 - The Pill 5 is a self-administered patient reported outcome measure (PROM) to quantify the degree of pill dysphagia
 - Keep an electronic version of the "Do-Not-Crush List" In your med SLP toolkit (see resources)
 - The Food and Drug Interaction Medical Journal, 2011
 - Karen Scheffler has a blog about Trouble Swallowing Pills
 - Have a conversation with your pharmacy team
 - Educate peer to peer



Resources:

DO-NOT-CRUSH List: http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/dmh/1042766_MedicationsDoNotCrushList.pdf

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Karen Sheffler - <https://swallowstudy.com/trouble-swallowing-pills-what-to-do-for-pill-dysphagia/>

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