

OET Case Notes

Speech Pathology · Beginner · Referral letter · to ENT Surgeon

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OET Case Notes: Speech Pathology Dysphagia Referral (Beginner)

THE CASE NOTES

Patient: Mr Thomas Park, 58 years old

Referral source: GP referral following two months of worsening difficulty swallowing

Presenting complaint: Progressive dysphagia to solids; no difficulty with liquids; occasional coughing after eating

Assessment: Oro-pharyngeal assessment normal; no oral weakness; laryngeal function intact clinically

Dietary modification: Currently IDDSI Level 5 (soft diet); maintaining adequate oral intake

Weight: 3 kg loss over 2 months (82 kg down to 79 kg)

Social history: Non-smoker; social alcohol; employed as school teacher

Clinical impression: Possible pharyngeal-phase dysphagia or structural lesion; clinical assessment insufficient to exclude

Investigation requested: Videofluoroscopy (modified barium swallow) to evaluate pharyngeal phase

Task: Write a referral letter to ENT surgeon Dr Sandra Ali requesting a videofluoroscopy for Mr Park, summarise your assessment findings and the reasons for referral.

WHAT TO INCLUDE

+ The nature and timeline of the dysphagia (progressive, solids only, 2 months)

The pattern of dysphagia is the most important diagnostic detail. Progressive solid dysphagia with liquid sparing points toward a structural cause — the ENT surgeon needs this to triage the referral appropriately.

+ Your clinical assessment findings and their limits

Stating what you ruled out (oral weakness, laryngeal dysfunction) explains why instrumental investigation is needed and gives the surgeon a clinical baseline.

+ The specific investigation requested and why

Purpose requires clarity. 'Videofluoroscopy to evaluate pharyngeal phase' is more informative than a generic 'further investigation'.

WHAT TO LEAVE OUT

– The patient's pre-illness weight

Mention the weight loss and current weight — but the pre-illness figure is not clinically necessary for this referral and uses words the word count does not allow.

– An explanation of IDDSI levels

ENT surgeons understand dietary modification codes. Explaining Level 5 treats the recipient as uninformed and wastes the letter's register.

CRITERION IN FOCUS · PURPOSE

Purpose is assessed in the opening sentences. The examiner should know in the first 25 words who the patient is, what you are asking for, and why. 'I am writing to request videofluoroscopy for Mr Thomas Park, 58, who presents with two months of progressive solid-food dysphagia' earns the Purpose mark. A vague opener such as 'I am writing with regard to the above patient' does not.

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