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Results

Londral et al. (2015) conducted a mixed-design randomized clinical trial to measure the effect of early intervention with an assistive communication device on the quality-of-life of ALS patients and their caregivers. Participants in the study included twenty-seven patients with bulbar-onset ALS (a form of the disease that impacts speech and swallowing first) and seventeen of their caregivers. Participants were randomized into two groups. The early intervention group received a tablet AAC device after baseline assessment, whereas the late intervention group received an AAC device according to protocols set by the center (when dysarthria scores reached 0 or 1 on the ALS Functional Rating Scale-revised (ALSFRRS-R)). Patient outcomes were measured using the ALS Functional Rating Scale-revised (ALSFRRS-R), the ALS Communication Assessment (ALSCOM), the ALS Quality of Life (ALSQOL), and the Caregiver Burden Scale (CBS). Results showed that the early intervention group had significantly better outcomes on all measures compared to the late intervention group. Specifically, the early intervention group had significantly higher scores on the ALSQOL (p < .05), significantly lower scores on the CBS (p < .05), and significantly better communication scores on the ALSCOM (p < .05). There were no significant differences between groups on the ALSFRRS-R (p > .05).

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