

Global Conference on Physiotherapy, Physical Rehabilitation & Sports Medicine

November 13-14, 2025 | Lisbon, Portugal



Rebecca Kimber, Clinical Speech and Language Therapist, Anne Rodger, Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist, Dr Gerry Christopfi, Consultant Neurologist

University College Hospital London, The National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, London, United Kingdom

Investigating the experience of people with oral difficulties as a result of peripheral facial palsy

Abstract: It is estimated that 22,500 people experience peripheral facial palsy (PFP) in the UK per year. People with PFP often experience oral deficits (OD) including difficulty eating, drinking, communicating, smiling, managing saliva, and creating a lip seal for leisure and vocational activities. There are no studies exploring patient's experiences of OD in PFP. This study aimed to understand the current literature into OD and facial palsy rehabilitation as well as explore participant's individual and shared experiences of OD and the impact on quality of life using a phenomenological framework. Public and patient involvement (PPI) was engaged to co-design the study. Purposive sampling techniques recruited participants through social media and PFP charities. A Reflexive Thematic Analysis approach was utilised for data analysis. Thirteen participants with PFP due to various aetiologies took part. 3 Focus groups were convened. All participants were from a white-British background, age range was 24-66 years of age, and participants were geographically scattered throughout the UK. Five intersecting themes were derived from the data: Experiences of mouth and lip difficulties, Experiences of other physical difficulties, Living with OD, The psychological impact of OD, Expectations for recovery. OD had a significant impact on the participant's psychological well-being, participation, function and QOL. The results of this study confirmed current literature and shed light on individual experiences with OD not addressed previously. Greater insight into the patient experience of OD will directly impact clinical practice, provide a platform for future research and development of outcome measures specific for OD and measuring rehabilitation interventions.

Keywords: facial therapy, facial palsy, facial rehabilitation, qualitative research, oral incompetence

Biography: Rebecca is a clinical specialist speech and language therapist who works with complex neurological, neuromuscular and neurodegenerative conditions. Her clinical specialist interest is in the treatment of peripheral and central facial palsy. She recently completed her Masters in Clinical Research, focusing on patients experiences in facial palsy. Rebecca has authored several papers on rehabilitation techniques in facial rehabilitation.