Easy2Digest: January 2024

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AB-SSD Chair Letter

Dear AB-SSD Affiliates,

Happy New Year! The American Board of Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders (AB-SSD) has enjoyed a productive and innovative year in 2023! Our mission continues to seek how to improve our service to consumers, qualified applicants, and existing affiliates. This year was once again of introspection for the board, stepping back to examine the rich legacy and foundation upon which the AB-SSD was built. It is a time-honored tradition for many of you to practice your own annual introspection and establish new year’s resolutions for self-improvement. The AB-SSD has a similar ritual, creating goals to be targeted by each of our committees throughout the year. Here, I’ll provide a brief summary of all we accomplished in 2023.

In 2023, we welcomed 9 new certified swallowing specialists to our affiliate base, now totaling 391 speech language pathologists. The AB-SSD has a well-established rigorous and systematic process for application review. Our continuing education requirements continue to adapt, now eliminating the previous requirement for CE credits to include in-person events. In addition, our Test Committee analyzes test questions for fairness and clarity on a yearly basis.
As part of our mission, we continue to offer advanced level continuing education on swallowing and swallowing disorders across the lifespan to serve SLP’s with and without specialty certification. We have continued to commit to providing low- or no cost educational opportunities, recognizing the importance of high-quality dysphagia CE for clinicians in all settings, regardless of budget or benefits. CE courses (CE Courses) offered on the website range in cost from $19-$50 per course dependent on number of CE hours credited. Participation in our CE program is greatly appreciated and supports future course development. Please help spread the word to those non-affiliates who are seeking advanced on-line continuing education options.

In 2023, the Continuing Education Committee held a highly successful summer series that involved both pediatric and adult tracks, which are available on the AB-SSD website. Additionally, we delivered four new courses that can be accessed on the AB-SSD website:


2. **Interprofessional Perspectives on Dysphagia: Pulmonary and Swallowing Disorders in Infants Born Preterm** [https://www.swallowingdisorders.org/page/InterprofessionalPerspectivesonDysphagia](https://www.swallowingdisorders.org/page/InterprofessionalPerspectivesonDysphagia)

3. **High-Resolution Pharyngeal Manometry: The Physiology and the Data** [https://www.swallowingdisorders.org/page/High-ResolutionPharyngealManometry](https://www.swallowingdisorders.org/page/High-ResolutionPharyngealManometry)

4. **SLPs and Gastroenterologists: An Essential Partnership in Dysphagia Management** [https://www.swallowingdisorders.org/page/SLPsandGastroenterologists](https://www.swallowingdisorders.org/page/SLPsandGastroenterologists)

Through a generous grant, we continued our partnership with Bracco Diagnostics to provide free CEUs for the Meet the Masters CE program, which this year was titled, Artificial Intelligence and Computational Deglutology: State of the Science and Dreams for the Future of Swallowing. Please visit our website to see the current and FREE CE offerings within the Bracco Diagnostics’ Meet the Masters (MTM) CE program (MTM CE Courses).

In 2024, we anticipate an AB-SSD invited course at ASHA Convention on pediatric dysphagia. We are targeting two more CE courses to be developed for the AB-SSD CE program, one on pediatrics and one on adults. And we cherish the opportunity to partner once again with Bracco Diagnostics for Meet the Masters 2024.

Our mentors are affiliates who generously volunteer their time to guide prospective applicants through the process of grooming toward application. This past year, the Mentorship Committee continued to assess mentor training to improve the current process and worked to identify additional opportunities to improve transparency in certification requirements. It is our mission that all qualified speech pathologists can visualize and follow the required steps to becoming a certified swallowing specialist.

And last, but not least, it is time to highlight the hard work of our tireless Public Relations and Communications Committee. This highly creative and industrious committee continues to keep our social media channels abuzz with information and events no matter what time of day (or night!). This last year brought the GIANT task of launching our new AB-SSD website ([https://www.swallowingdisorders.org](https://www.swallowingdisorders.org)), which will continue to be revised as needed. While coordinating this herculean task, the committee also published 3 Easy to Digest (E2D) news
briefs which are sent out via email when published and can be accessed via our website (E2D Archives). They continued the Founders Project, which initially highlighted Dr. Barbara Sonies, where stories are shared on the history of AB-SSD and the importance of obtaining BCS-S. They stay very active on social media advertising our CEUs, Meet The Masters, awareness months, and many posts through the Dysphagia Awareness Month in June. We appreciate all your "likes" and shares to spread the word. Lastly, they continue to share stories from you, our affiliates, such as Aaron Padilla, who shared 5 tips on how to apply for BCS-S.

Finally, I would like to highlight two critical initiatives that will continue to drive our program development in 2024:

1. Mentorship initiative: The AB-SSD continues to recognize and examine the concerning gap between our applications processes and our mentorship service to aspiring applicants. Our mentors are affiliates who generously volunteer their time to guide prospective applicants through the process of grooming toward application. The board will continue to reorganize mentor training and improve transparency in certification requirements. It is our mission that all qualified speech pathologists can visualize and follow the required steps to becoming a certified swallowing specialist.

2. Membership initiative: The AB-SSD has received many inquiries over the years about whether BCS-S certification or renewal can be more inclusive of SLP’s in administrative and academic/research roles. We have committed to closer examination of how certification may be possible in both of these realms.

With each passing year, we celebrate new additions to the board, while at the same time, extending our gratitude to those who have completed their service. On January 1, 2024, we welcomed Erin Reedy and Laurie Wennerholm as our newest board members. Molly Knigge (former Chairperson) and Mario Landera (former Treasurer) completed their terms in December 2023; we sincerely thank them for their service to the AB-SSD, including several years as part of the Executive Committee on the AB-SSD Board of Directors. We will continue to search for a new Historian and Consumer Board Member.

Lastly, for those seeking a volunteer opportunity with the AB-SSD, any of our hard-working and highly rewarding committees can be a great chance to contribute.

On behalf of the AB-SSD Board of Directors, we look forward to working with all of you to accomplish our objectives and continue to serve you as an affiliate of our amazing organization. May it be a productive year of a growth mindset that allows us to serve and advance the care of individuals with feeding and swallowing disorders across the lifespan.

Kendrea L. (Focht) Garand, PhD, CScD, CCC-SLP, BCS-S
AB-SSD Chair

Ready Set Go!

Getting ready for board certification?
Look for advanced coursework from ABSSD or DRS for wonderful learning opportunities.
Join Dysphagia Research Society (https://www.dysphagiaresearch.org) and get free access to DRSIE (Dysphagia Research Society Institute for Education: https://www.dysphagiaresearch.org/page/about-drsie) to provide you with evidenced based continuing education across a variety of topic and patient populations.
Dysphagia Research Society Annual Conference

Early Bird Registration ending January 31st

https://www.dysphagiaresearch.org/page/2024-Annual-Meeting

Continuing Education

Call for Pediatric Volunteers

Do you specialize in pediatrics? The CE Committee is looking for volunteers who specialize in pediatric dysphagia/feeding and swallowing disorders to join the committee to assist with organizing CE events. If you focus on pediatrics and are interested, let us know! Email: info@swallowingdisorders.org. Thank you!

Share Our Content

In addition to the great courses mentioned above in the AB-SSD Chair letter, keep checking out all our continuing education content: https://www.swallowingdisorders.org/page/continuinged
Thank you in advance for sharing it on social media platforms.
2023 Meet The Masters

**Coming soon!** Did you miss the "Meet the Masters" event in Boston this year? Thanks to a generous grant from Bracco Diagnostics, you can still view the event free of charge and get CEUs! Below is the course description.

See full course link here to register and watch this free course when it is available: [https://www.swallowingdisorders.org/page/braccoce](https://www.swallowingdisorders.org/page/braccoce)

Artificial Intelligence/Machine learning methods are permeating all aspects of health and physiologic measurement — including swallowing. Powerful and promising tools are emerging, addressing all aspects of swallowing. Register now for this FREE course at www.mtmslp.com

Artificial Intelligence/Machine learning methods are permeating all aspects of health and physiologic measurement — including swallowing. Powerful and promising tools are emerging, addressing all aspects of swallowing to assist SLPs in exploring associations between disease and swallowing events, muscle movements, sounds and sensor-measured signals. The application of these advanced, deep-learning techniques — including neural network development and testing, the evaluation of different sensor types, and the dissemination of commercialized products and smartphone apps — are discussed and explored. The future of computational deglutology and the application of these tools into clinical practice are also presented.
The decision to pursue Board Certification in Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders (BCS-S) was not solely for a professional title or milestone but a commitment to raising the standard of care for individuals with swallowing disorders.

I am a multilingual medical speech-language pathologist, born and raised in Mumbai, India. I grew up watching close family members suffer the devastating consequences of a stroke, dementia, and cerebral palsy, all of which initially drew me to the field of speech-language pathology (SLP). Upon completing my undergraduate degree and working with patients in the field, I discovered my passion for the medical side of SLP, particularly in the area of swallowing disorders (dysphagia). Fueled by this, I immigrated to the United States (U.S.) in 2009, to pursue further studies and my dream of becoming a medical SLP. Since graduating in 2011, I have worked across a variety of medical settings across the care continuum in the U.S., served in various leadership roles, and been involved in several dysphagia research and educational initiatives over the years. Witnessing firsthand the many challenges faced by patients impacted by dysphagia and driven by the desire to provide them with the best level of care, I was compelled to elevate my expertise, and the pursuit of BCS-S emerged as the next logical step.

The journey to BCS-S has not only shaped my career but also defined my purpose in making a lasting impact on individuals facing swallowing challenges. Beyond the letters, the BCS-S is a strategic roadmap to advancing knowledge, skills, expertise, and experience in swallowing and swallowing disorders. Under the mentorship of Laurie Sterling, my ABSSD mentor, I embarked on a transformative 7-year plan. This journey involved pursuing continuing education and training in dysphagia assessment and intervention, and stepping beyond the confines of daily clinical duties to actively volunteer, teach, and lead. Embracing each of these diverse roles has enriched my perspectives and empowered me to contribute holistically to our field.

Volunteering with state and national associations like ASHA and DRS, mentoring and teaching students, leading quality improvement projects at work, and sharing expertise with peers became avenues not only for professional growth, but significant personal development as well.
Volunteering has now become a cornerstone of my journey, highlighting the importance of giving back to the SLP community and fostering a collaborative spirit within the field. I have also been involved in creating a mobile app for clinicians managing dysphagia, and an online learning platform called the Swallowing Training and Education Portal, offering affordable and accessible dysphagia education in swallowing and swallowing disorders to thousands of clinicians globally. All these innovations are tangible manifestations of the ripple effect of BCS-S as well. Through these endeavors, I aim to deepen our understanding of swallowing disorders, enhance clinical practices, and elevate the standard of care for those impacted by swallowing disorders.

Tips I can share with aspiring specialists include setting realistic and meaningful goals, embracing mentorship, pursuing continuing education and volunteer opportunities, committing to lifelong learning, finding opportunities to share knowledge and expertise, and engaging in advocacy. In essence, BCS-S is a transformative journey that transcends the individual clinician. It symbolizes not just a personal achievement but a collective commitment to continuous improvement, the pursuit of excellence, and, ultimately, enhancing the lives of individuals impacted by swallowing disorders.

**Congratulations to the Newest AB-SSD Board Members:**

**Laurie Wennerholm,**
**MA, CCC-SLP, BCS-S**

**Erin Reedy,**
**MS, PhD, CCC-SLP, BCS-S**

**AB-SSD Myth BUSTERS!**
WORRY: I am worried that my job no longer allows time off to attend in person continuing education courses and therefore will not qualify me for the 7.5 CEUs for my board certification application.

FACT: "As of January 2023, a minimum of 1.0 CEUs needs to be obtained from Advanced level events/opportunities. Attendance at live in-person conferences will no longer be required".

Congratulations to the Newest AB-SSD Affiliates:

Congrats on obtaining your BCS-S!

Introducing three new AB-SSD Affiliates!

Kimber Deal
Dignity Health Chandler Medical Center

Jessica Pisenga
Boston University Medical Center
AB-SSD Mentor Selena Reece

Rinki Varindani Desai
University of Mississippi Medical Center
AB-SSD Mentor Laurie Sterling

Awareness Months

January
Birth Defects Prevention Month
January 24: Moebius Syndrome Awareness Day

February
Kids ENT Health Month
February 4: World Cancer Day
Last day of February each year: Rare Disease Day
March
Brain Injury Awareness Month
Cerebral Palsy Awareness Month
March 25: Cerebral Palsy Awareness Day
Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month
Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month

E2D Library
Check out past E2D newsletters here: https://www.swallowingdisorders.org/page/easy-to-digest