Study Results - STH22185, IRAS 314590, CPMS 52295

Introduction: Thickening fluids in the routine care of patients with swallowing difficulties is a well-known practice that helps patients maintain hydration orally. Xanthan gum thickeners have grown in use as an alternative to starch-based thickeners in the dietary management of oropharyngeal dysphagia (OD). Precise ThickN INSTANT (PTI) is a novel product that delivers xanthan gum in a liquid form instead of a powder. This prospective controlled multi-centre single arm interventional feasibility study of acceptability aimed to provide gastrointestinal (GI) tolerance, palatability and compliance data in support of a submission to the Advisory Committee for Borderline Substances (ACBS).

Methods: Oral fluids were thickened with a novel liquid xanthan gum thickener (PTI); with a methodology adhering to standardised requirements of the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research. Beverages thickened with PTI were tested for palatability (primary outcome), ease of use, GI symptoms and compliance by medically diagnosed dysphagic participants for 14 days, following a 7-day period under usual mode of care (ACBS-approved xanthan gum powder) and a 5-day washout period.

Results: 24 participants provided usable data. Mean overall palatability ratings (measured on a 10-point visual analogue scale) revealed significantly higher perceptions of palatability ($p<0.001$) for beverages thickened with PTI (mean 8.04 (SD 2.20)) than for beverages thickened under usual mode of care (mean 4.17 (SD 2.78). Compared with usual mode of care, PTI thickener showed substantive improvements in all individual palatability attributes, all satisfaction/ease of use attributes, equivalent or improved symptoms of GI with excellent levels of GI tolerance and compliance. Side effects associated with PTI thickener were mild in nature and of short duration.

Conclusion: Tested thickened beverages were palatable, acceptable, and well tolerated in the cohort of dysphagic participants for whom it is indicated.