

Putting Nutrition at the Heart of Patient Care

Nutrition and Hydration Week 2024 – 11–17 March

What is ahead for nutritional care in the UK?

Nutrition and Hydration Week has taken place every March since 2012 – bringing people together to create energy, focus and fun, in order to highlight and educate people on the value of good nutrition and hydration in maintaining health and well-being.

This year's 'awareness week' is particularly relevant as, over the last year, the Government has been developing its Major Conditions Strategy,¹ focused on the following key principles:

- Rebalancing the health and care system towards a personalised approach to prevention through the management of risk factors
- Embedding early diagnosis and treatment delivery in the community
- Managing multiple conditions effectively - including embedding generalist and specialist skills within teams, organisations and individual clinicians
- Seeking much closer alignment and integration between physical and mental health services.

With these principles, and an evolution from a single-disease approach to health services planning to a multimorbidity approach, the strategy has the potential to support a significant shift in how good nutritional care can better manage malnutrition risk and mitigate the impacts of malnutrition on vulnerable patients.

According to NHS figures, the number of people admitted to English hospitals with a primary or secondary diagnosis of malnutrition has nearly trebled since 2009-10, rising from 3,500 to a little more than 10,000 last year.²

In addition, new research published by the think-tank *Future Health* in November 2023 found that that nearly half a million people admitted to NHS hospitals in England are malnourished – equivalent to over 50 people admitted to hospital every hour.¹

References: 1. Gov.UK (2023.) Major Conditions Strategy: case for change and our strategic framework. Accessed online: www.gov.uk/government/publications/major-conditions-strategy-case-for-change-and-our-strategic-framework/major-conditions-strategy-case-for-change-and-our-strategic-framework--2 (Jan 2024). 2. Future Health (2023). Hiding in plain sight: Tackling malnutrition as part of the prevention agenda. Accessed online: www.futurehealth-research.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Hiding-in-plain-sight-Web-FINAL-Nov-2023.pdf (Jan 2024). 3. Elia M (2015). The cost of malnutrition in England and potential cost savings from nutritional interventions (full report): A report on the cost of disease-related malnutrition in England and a budget impact analysis of implementing the NICE clinical guidelines/quality standard on nutritional support in adults. Accessed online: www.bapen.org.uk/pdfs/economic-report-short.pdf (Jan 2024). 4. NICE (2006). Nutrition support in adults: oral nutrition support, enteral tube feeding and parenteral nutrition (Clinical guideline [CG32]). Accessed online: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg32 (Jan 2024).

There are an estimated three million people at risk of, or experiencing, malnutrition in the UK,³ however as our population ages and the number with major conditions increases, rates of malnutrition may rise by half a million, at a projected cost of an extra £4 billion by 2035.¹

The NICE Clinical Guideline on Nutrition Support for Adults (NICE CG32)⁴ recognises that malnutrition is both a cause and an effect of ill health and that 'good nutrition support services' are crucial in treating a number of other conditions. Raising awareness of the scale of this challenge and how good nutrition and hydration can impact patient outcomes is a vitally important message for health and social care.

BSNA supports Nutrition and Hydration Week and the valuable work that takes place to promote good practice in preventing malnutrition and dehydration within health and social care.

Malnutrition is an issue that impacts patients in all six conditions identified as priority areas in the Major Conditions Strategy: all cancers; cardiovascular diseases, including stroke and diabetes; chronic respiratory diseases; dementia; mental ill health; musculoskeletal disorders; and the strategy itself presents new opportunities to tackle the issue.

It is important that the Government makes malnutrition an NHS prevention priority, enabling Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) to develop their nutritional care and hydration strategies as an exemplar of how integrated care delivers value across the system and most importantly secures better patient outcomes.

About the British Specialist Nutrition Association

BSNA is the trade association representing the manufacturers of products designed to meet the particular nutritional needs of individuals; these include specialist products for infants and young children (including infant formula, follow-on formula, young child formula and complementary weaning foods), medical nutrition products for diseases, disorders and medical conditions, including oral nutritional supplements, enteral tube feeding and parenteral nutrition, as well as companies who aseptically compound chemotherapy, parenteral nutrition and CIVAS.