

Putting Nutrition at the Heart of Patient Care

Supporting Excellence in Nutritional Care A reflection on our previous CN communications

As the world continues to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and with the continuing crisis unfolding within the NHS, the specialist nutrition industry remains committed to its role as a key healthcare partner during times of change and uncertainty. The industry remains focussed on providing high quality support to both patients and healthcare professionals (HCPs) and working together with commissioners as the NHS commissioning environment continues to change. Here we reflect on our previous CN communications and how these might inform the future to ensure patients can continue to benefit from the range of products and services that help to support excellence in nutritional care.

Past informs the future

The delivery of high-quality healthcare requires partnerships that can deliver not just now but well into the future by investing in innovation and research. Key nutrition research milestones in the past have paved the way for the medical nutrition solutions that currently benefit a broad spectrum of patients in the management of their medical conditions. Research into the role of medical nutrition in disease management is growing exponentially with exciting areas emerging such as the gut microbiome influencing new nutritional management solutions in specific therapy areas. To push the boundaries further and to develop new, effective, nutritional solutions for both existing and new medical therapy areas, the specialist nutrition industry continues to invest in research and innovation. A CN article published in 2022 by the BSNA covered this topic in more detail and can be accessed here: <https://bit.ly/BSNAclinnut>



Responsive regulation and reimbursement

The regulatory framework and reimbursement process for medical nutrition products should ensure that patients have timely access to appropriate, high quality and innovative medical foods. In the UK the regulatory framework for Foods for Special Medical Purposes (FSMP) still reflects the EU legislation which was in place prior to Brexit and includes the requirement to notify the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) Nutrition Legislation Team (NLT) when FSMP are placed on the market in the UK. A comprehensive application for product reimbursement prepared according to agreed guidelines is submitted to the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS). Although they are independent entities, the ACBS and NLT each play an important role in ensuring patients and HCPs have timely access to the products they need. An efficient regulatory and reimbursement review process, in turn, supports a robust industry which is in the longer-term interests of both patients and the wider NHS. This is essential to ensure a stable,

yet dynamic, healthcare partnership between industry and the wider health economy. All stakeholders have an important role to play to ensure the regulatory and reimbursement processes continue to meet the needs of patients now and in the future. A full overview of this topic was provided in the BSNA article published in CN in 2022 and can be accessed here: <https://bit.ly/BSNAreg2rem>



Innovations in nutritional care

The development of new products to enhance nutritional care for patients is complex and time consuming. The specialist nutrition industry plans many years in advance before launching a new product, considering multiple factors such as emerging research, ingredient innovation, technological and manufacturing capabilities, packaging innovation, clinical studies, and the regulatory and reimbursement framework. New product development is always underpinned by patient need, often across multiple countries rather than just the UK. Collaborative working between healthcare professionals in industry and clinical practice ensures that patient needs are identified and innovation takes place to meet these. Achieving the best innovations to support patient care requires a specialist nutrition industry that has the flexibility and freedom to innovate. The complexity of the product development process was described in more detail in the BSNA CN article published in 2021 and can be accessed here: <https://bit.ly/BSNAproddev>

As we look forward to 2023 and beyond, the specialist nutrition industry will strive to continue to be a committed and dynamic healthcare partner to commissioning organisations, the wider NHS and with other key stakeholders by aligning objectives and taking a long-term strategic approach to patient care.



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.