

TIME FOR A 'NUTRITION TSAR' TO TACKLE MALNUTRITION IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE?

As figures show the number of people with malnutrition admitted to hospital has doubled in the last decade, the British Specialist Nutrition Association (BSNA) look to NHS and social care bodies to give greater leadership to address the challenge of malnutrition, particularly where it is related to particular medical conditions and diseases.

The number of adults being admitted to hospital with malnutrition has more than doubled in the last decade, with admissions related to a primary diagnosis of malnutrition increasing to 735 in 2017-18 from 348 in 2008-09, according to new figures released by NHS Digital.

3 million people in the UK are malnourished



1 in 3 in care homes



1 in 10 visiting their GP



1 in 4 hospital admissions

Tackling malnutrition is a priority for PATIENTS



Hospitalised malnourished patients are **3 times more at risk of infection** than well-nourished patients.



Poor nutritional status is a key risk factor in the development of **pressure ulcers**.



1 in 4 hip fracture patients are at risk of malnutrition, or are malnourished on admission to an NHS hospital.



Hospitalised patients at 'high risk' of malnutrition are **12 times more likely to die early** than those at 'no risk'.

There was also a dramatic increase in the number of admissions with a secondary diagnosis of malnutrition, with the figure more than trebling over the last ten years from 2,545 to 7,803.

Over three million people in the UK are estimated to be either malnourished or at risk of malnutrition and £23.5bn is spent by health and care services to manage it each year. It costs over £5,000 more to manage someone who is malnourished than well-nourished and it affects all parts of the country regardless of relative wealth.

The British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (BAPEN), Age UK and Independent Age have also called for more action from Government to ensure malnutrition is better identified and treated across health and social care.

In research published by BSNA last year, through its *Forgotten not Fixed: A Blueprint to Tackle the Increasing Burden of Malnutrition in England* report, more than half of the hospital trusts in England may be reporting malnutrition rates that appear to be below national estimates.

Responding to the figures, BSNA Director General, Declan O'Brien said,

"Currently one in three people in care homes, one in ten visiting their GP and one in four people admitted to hospital are malnourished. We know the number of malnourished people is increasing rather than decreasing. This is unacceptable – we need action."

For a country with the fifth highest GDP in the world, such statistics are shocking; they are even more alarming when one realises that the number of deaths from malnutrition has risen by nearly a third in the last decade.



Declan added: "While there is now some attention on hospital food with the recently announced national review, for many, malnutrition is a consequence of an illness that prevents them from eating or absorbing nutrients normally.

"For these patients, what is often needed is timely nutrition support through prescribed medical nutrition (known as foods for special medical purposes or medical foods), whether they are in hospital, in care homes or in their own homes".

Currently, responsibility for nutritional care across health and social care, including the assessment and identification of patients at risk of malnutrition and appropriate management, is spread across a number of organisations and roles. As malnutrition continues to increase, BSNA is calling for the appointment of a clinical director for nutrition within NHS England to provide leadership across all settings and for all patients at risk of malnutrition.

CASE STUDY

JOYCE, 83 yrs old

Joyce, who lived alone, had a fall. The following three weeks in hospital led to her losing 17% of her weight due to loss of appetite. She was discharged home without any consultation with a dietitian or continued care plan including nutrition. Considered to be end of life, she was picked up by a palliative care nurse. The nurse identified that she was severely undernourished and after a regime of two nutritional drink supplements a day for 12 weeks, she was taken off the end of life register and went back to living independently.

THE COST OF MALNUTRITION

- Cost of malnutrition to the public purse in England is **£19.6 billion**
- Malnutrition represents **15% of total public expenditure** on health and social care
- It costs **£7,408 per year to care for a malnourished patient** compared to £2,155 for a well-nourished patient

IT COSTS MORE NOT TO TREAT MALNUTRITION - THAN TO DO SO

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