



Martha Hughes,
Scientific and
Regulatory
Executive, BSNA

Martha is an Associate Nutritionist with a degree in Nutrition from the University of Surrey. She has research and regulatory experience in specialist nutrition.

UPDATE ON IDDSI FROM THE BSNA

The International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) came about to develop international standardised terminology for texture modified foods and thickened liquids for people with dysphagia.

Every day we take swallowing for granted, but for those with dysphagia it can be stressful, unpleasant and unsafe. Dysphagia is the medical term

used to describe difficulty with swallowing.¹ Though it can differ in severity, dysphagia is estimated to affect approximately 8% of the world's population.² Whatever the severity, without the correct management it can lead to difficulty in consuming enough food and/or drink, resulting in malnutrition or dehydration and/or to aspiration, where the food or fluid goes into the airways, which can result in choking or pneumonia.

In 2015, an IDDSI Expert Group was set up by NHS England. This multidisciplinary group consisted of healthcare professionals, trade associations, manufacturers, a mechanical engineer, and was originally chaired and supported by NHS Improvement, and latterly co-chaired by representatives of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) and the British Dietetic Association (BDA). The BDA and RCSLT see the adoption of the IDDSI Framework bringing great benefit to patients and carers alike, including improving patient safety and providing greater opportunities to collect and evaluate treatment outcomes. Along with adding clinical and physiological evidence to the existing descriptors,^{3,4} the IDDSI Framework combines levels for food and fluids, so the safety of patients has been considered for both eating and drinking. The Framework consists of a continuum of eight levels (Figure 1) and includes descriptors and testing methods. For full information, visit iddsi.org.⁵

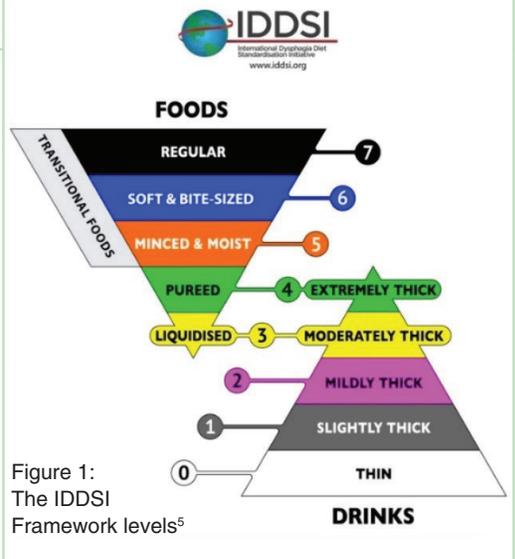


Figure 1:
The IDDSI
Framework levels⁵

The UK is currently in a 12-month transition phase to IDDSI, with IDDSI expected to be fully implemented by April 2019. Manufacturers of dysphagia products (such as texture modified meals or thickeners) will be updating their labels to be in line with the IDDSI descriptors. These products will transition at different times during the phased implementation period. As trials have shown that dual labelling often causes confusion, there will be no dual labelling for thickeners.

It can take six to 12 months to implement IDDSI in a care setting. Implementation will require system change, so it is advisable to set up a multidisciplinary implementation team, including a dietitian, SLT, caterers and nurses to help plan and execute this initiative. It is also advised to make contact with suppliers to establish their timeframe for transition.

TOOLS AVAILABLE

The IDDSI Expert Group has developed an 'Implementation Pack' which contains checklists, posters, leaflets and training slides for healthcare professionals. These resources can be accessed via the RCSLT and BDA websites. Manufacturers of thickeners will also be producing appropriate support for the changes that are required for their products.

REFERENCES

- Please visit the Subscriber zone at NHDmag.com.
- More on IDDSI at: www.iddsi.org