

An Update on Specialist Nutrition

Specialist nutrition helps people to be healthy, survive and thrive at every stage of their lives. It supports positive health outcomes and reduces costs to the NHS.

Maternal Obesity Report

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on a Fit and Healthy Childhood has published a report on *Maternal Obesity*, which is an addition to the body of knowledge surrounding the determinants and consequences of childhood obesity.

The report recognises the importance of providing healthy lifestyle advice to adults of childbearing age to make them aware that their weight can impact upon the health of their future children. It also recommends that advice on formula feeding and the safe preparation of formula food should be part of the antenatal experience, alongside stressing the optimal benefits of breastfeeding.

The APPG's report revealed that: *"Healthcare Professionals have found themselves increasingly unprepared to offer advice on nutrition in pregnancy and feeding an infant afterwards. Lack of resources both financial and in time allocation have produced a 'tick box' culture whereby essential information is loaded upon prospective parents and the relevant advisers have cited an urgent need for continual professional development to update their skills."*

In both England and Scotland, it appears that in some cases this is due to an erroneous belief on the part of midwives and health visitors that the Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) national standards only permit them to communicate about breastfeeding. In addition, there are gaps in the midwives' and health visitors' own knowledge about infant feeding. Consequently, parents are unlikely to be able to make an informed choice about what and how best to

feed their baby and there is a risk that they may start to formula feed without fully understanding the best and safest way to do so.

It is, therefore, imperative that midwives and health visitors are fully, and suitably, educated and knowledgeable on all methods of infant feeding, so as to ensure that parents can be appropriately informed.

Survey highlights the importance of gluten-free prescriptions in supporting patients with coeliac disease

A recent Department of Health consultation on the availability of gluten-free foods on prescription for patients with coeliac disease prompted BSNA to seek the views of patients, their parents and carers to understand the role a gluten-free prescription plays in managing this lifelong condition. The responses were used to help formulate an official response to the Department of Health consultation. In total, over 4000 survey responses were received over a period of six days.

The important role a gluten-free prescription plays in supporting patients to manage their condition was clearly demonstrated, as the majority of respondents who received products on prescription felt that this was an important factor in helping them to adhere to treatment. Interestingly, the survey also found that approximately three-quarters of these respondents benefit from added value support services provided by manufacturers of prescription products. These services include access to specialist dietitians via carelines, specialist events and resources all focused

on supporting management strategies recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and healthcare professionals. The survey also revealed that a higher percentage of patients who received a prescription also received an annual review, compared to those not receiving a prescription. This is important as the NICE Quality Standard on coeliac disease¹ states that patients with coeliac disease should be offered an annual review.

A study published in July 2017² found that a large proportion of participants with coeliac disease were not adhering to a gluten-free diet despite adherence being fundamental in preventing long-term complications associated with coeliac disease. Findings did show, however, that more patients receiving gluten-free foods on prescription adhered to a gluten-free diet compared to those not receiving gluten-free foods on prescription (58% and 38% respectively).

The current trend of Clinical Commissioning Groups restricting or removing gluten-free prescriptions, coupled with the high costs and limited availability of gluten-free foods, compared with gluten-containing foods, leads to real concerns over long-term health risks for people with coeliac disease. BSNA hopes that the outcome of the Department of Health consultation puts an end to the postcode lottery and enables all patients clinically diagnosed with coeliac disease to receive the appropriate support and treatment.

References: 1. NICE (2016). Coeliac Disease. Quality standard [QS134] Accessed online: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs134 (Aug 2017). 2. Muhammad H, et al. (2017). Adherence to a Gluten Free Diet Is Associated with Receiving Gluten Free Foods on Prescription and Understanding Food Labelling. *Nutrients*; 9(7): 705.

We congratulate PINNT on their 30th Anniversary

Patients on Intravenous and Naso-gastric Nutrition Treatment (PINNT) is a charity run by patients for patients. PINNT has been established for over 30 years, providing mutual support and understanding to hundreds of adults and children and their families adapting to life on home artificial nutrition. For more information about PINNT and its aims, visit: www.PINNT.com.



NEW briefing document available on Complementary Foods

BSNA has developed a new briefing document on 'Complementary Foods'. To view, visit the infant nutrition section of bsna.co.uk.

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 diagnosed disorders and medical conditions, parenteral nutrition and gluten-free foods on prescription. www.bsna.co.uk