



Canadian  
Malnutrition  
Task Force

le Groupe de  
travail canadien  
sur la malnutrition

### **A dietitian's perspective on the use of SGA in her practice**

Subjective global assessment (SGA), the gold standard for nutrition assessment, identifies and diagnoses patients who are malnourished. With appropriate training, it is a quick and easy tool to determine which patients require an in-depth nutrition assessment and care plan.

Conducting SGA on each patient who is screened to be at nutrition risk provides a quick snap shot of the patient's nutrition acuity and can be used to make informed decisions regarding the allocation of scarce resources. Each patient with a SGA B (moderately malnourished) or C (severely malnourished) requires a nutrition intervention to facilitate recovery, reduce length of hospital stay and readmission.

If other health care providers can be trained to use this tool, why should I as a dietitian, include SGA as part of the nutrition care process? The recent clinical characteristics proposed for identification and documentation of adult malnutrition include the physical exam (Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition 2012); and SGA is a tool that includes this necessary component of the nutrition assessment and aligns perfectly with these recommendations.

How has using SGA benefited my practice? It has improved my job satisfaction because I feel that I am providing the best nutrition care possible since I am able to identify patients who are malnourished and are most in need of my care. SGA has enhanced my interactions with patients and other healthcare professionals as I can describe what I see, what it means and how the patient can be treated. Other healthcare providers often wonder about our role as dietitians and by conducting nutrition-focused physical examinations this provides a visible sign of our practice. They see us providing hands-on care, in addition to our usual comprehensive assessment and education. Having physical contact with patients aligns my work with the work of other healthcare professionals and it helps them to recognize and value my contributions to the team.

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