PREVALENCE, DETECTION, AND CAUSES OF MALNUTRITION IN CANADIAN HOSPitals: The Nurse’s Perspective

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Rationale
To address the prevalence of malnutrition in hospitalized patients an interdisciplinary team is warranted. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the knowledge, attitude and perceptions of nurses regarding nutrition care in hospital.

Methods
• 723 nurses from medical and surgical wards in 11 hospitals across Canada, involved in the CMTF Nutrition Care in Canadian Hospitals study were invited to complete a survey
• 48% response rate (n=345)
• Survey was adapted from previously validated European research on nutrition care standards (Rasmussen et al., 1999)
• Examples of questions included perception on the prevalence of malnutrition and its causes, interest and relevance in nutrition assessment and screening etc.

Results

Nurse’s Perception of Malnutrition in Hospital
• Prevalence of malnutrition as detected in the CMTF study is 45%, whereas upwards of 20% nurses believed that malnutrition was not a problem.
• 17% of nurses indicated that lack of assistance with eating was a major contributor to hospital malnutrition.

Nutrition Assessment
• 45% of nurses did not recognize the malnutrition that was occurring on their units
• 92.5% reported that they could incorporate a 3-question nutrition screen as part of their admission process

Resources Available to Nurses
• 39% reported access to nutrition education, whereas 92% expressed desire for additional nutrition training
• 48% reported access to protocols identifying patients at nutrition risk, but 91% were interested in having a protocol

Self-reported knowledge, interest and relevance of nutrition assessments (based on 10 point scale)

Conclusion
Nurses are well positioned to assist with the identification and nutrition management of acute care patients by taking on relevant roles such as nutrition screening at admission or specific nutrition management tasks during hospitalization. However, clearly defined roles and available resources are necessary to standardize and optimize the role of nursing staff regarding nutrition care in hospital.

References