Improving Nutrition Care in Hospitalized Patients

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Objective:

To study how to improve nutrition care in hospital by implementing the Integrated Nutrition Pathway for Acute Care (INPAC).

Background:

- 1 in 2 patients are malnourished upon admission to hospital1
- Malnutrition is linked to longer length of stay and higher morbidity and mortality1
- Detection, prevention and treatment of malnutrition is a challenge as there is limited awareness and involvement of the whole health care team1

Methods:

Location: Medicine unit at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in the Edmonton Zone (1 of 5 Canadian hospitals in a national study)

Timeframe: December 2015 to November 2016

Project leads: unit nurse (RN) and dietitian (RD)
- RD addressed nutrition questions
- RN provided practical front-line support

A team approach to nutrition care
- Data was collected about nutrition care practices on the unit
- Results were shared with the team
- Education was provided to staff to support awareness, knowledge and change in practices
- Unit staff collaborated to find opportunities to improve nutrition care practices and implement elements of INPAC
- Change was guided by input of staff through formal meetings and informal chats

Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA)
- Changes to nutrition care were implemented over 12 months using PDSA cycles
- Audits were conducted each month and feedback was provided to the team
- Team reviewed progress and identified further changes for improvement

Outcomes:

Nutrition screening
Patients are flagged for nutrition risk, resulting in earlier intervention for malnourished patients.

Weekly weight monitoring
Monitoring body weight helps to identify nutrition risk during admission.

Optimizing nutrition intake
The following improvements were made:
- Increased access to food outside of normal meal service times
- Introduction of a system to monitor how much a patient has eaten, and actions to take if a patient is not eating well
- Introduction of a volunteer meal assistance program
- Implementation of MedPass, a nutrition supplement program for patients with malnutrition

Conclusions:

This innovative project demonstrated how team collaboration, strong champions, along with audit feedback, can improve nutrition care. Results have helped to determine what approaches work best to support and sustain change, which will guide next steps to spread successes in Alberta Health Services. The results of this local project have also contributed to national learnings, and informed a toolkit to support spread of INPAC across Canada.

INPAC Toolkit: [http://nutritioncareincanada.ca/inpac/inpac-toolkit](http://nutritioncareincanada.ca/inpac/inpac-toolkit)

Acknowledgments:

We would like to thank Michelle Booth, RD, Sheila Doering, RN, the staff on 6East at the Royal Alexandra Hospital for their invaluable support. This research is funded by CFN (Canadian Frailty Network), which is supported by the Government of Canada through the Networks of Centres of Excellence program.