



Adding Malnutrition Screening Tool scores to ward lists increases identification & treatment of older patients at risk of malnutrition



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This study tests the effectiveness of implementing a malnutrition screening tool on rates of malnutrition screening, and detection in elderly patients admitted to hospital in a rural area and the impact on timeliness of provision of Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT).

A time series design was used to assess changes in practice before and after the introduction of the MST score on the nursing ward list and daily contact by an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) for MST scores. There were 142 patients (>60yrs) from hospital wards at five sites in the Upper Hunter who participated in the study. All participants had the same data on MST score, Subjective Global Assessment (SGA), referrals to APD from MST, distribution of nutritional supplements and Length of Stay (LOS) recorded. A chi-squared test was performed to examine whether results were different between groups. Measurements for 76 patients were collected before the intervention and 66 patients in the after group.

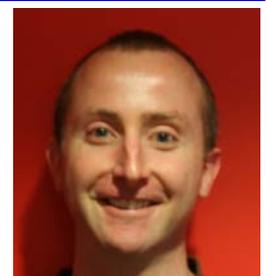
When hospitals had the MST included on the nursing ward lists there was a 43% ($\chi^2=31.25$, $df=1$, $p<0.001$) increase in MST completion rate and 22% ($\chi^2=13.89$, $df=1$, $p<0.001$) increase in referrals to the APD secondary to MST score results. Referrals increased from 7% to 57% ($\chi^2=16.05$, $df=1$, $p<0.001$) for patients with malnutrition as identified by SGA score of B or C. The provision of supplements also increased in intervention group by 25% ($\chi^2=11.03$, $df=1$, $p<0.001$) for total patients and 71% ($\chi^2=21.16$, $df=1$, $p<0.001$) for malnourished patients. The data did not indicate any difference in LOS between the two groups.

Adding the MST score to the nursing ward list and the practice of the APD contacting ward to determine scores was found to be effective in increasing completion of MST by nursing staff, increasing referrals to the APD for patients at risk for malnutrition and increasing provision of appropriate MNT for those shown to be at risk.

The research demonstrated that collaboration between the APD and nursing staff can lead to effective implementation of a systems approach to identifying and treating malnutrition in a vulnerable rural population where services are limited.

For the full report on this project visit our website, follow the link to the Rural Research Capacity Building Program and click on 'view completed projects'

Shaun Seldon is a Dietitian in the Upper Hunter region of NSW where he supports the facilities of Muswellbrook, Scone, Merriwa, Murrurundi, Denman, Quirindi and Werris Creek.



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