Practical tool for dieticians navigating protein transition for patients at risk of malnutrition

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Description of the initiative

Malnutrition significantly impacts patient recovery, immune function, and overall quality of life, particularly among those with chronic diseases, age-related issues or post-surgical recovery. Adequate protein intake is crucial for muscle preservation, wound healing, and immune support. With the shift towards 60% plant-based protein, there is growing concern over its medical feasibility for adult patients at risk of malnutrition. Currently, dietitians lack practical tools to implement this transition effectively in adult patients at risk of malnutrition. Also, for many regular foods, enriched diets and medical foods the protein quantity and especially protein quality are unknown.

Our objective is to develop a practical tool to guide dieticians in ensuring a protein and energy enriched diet consisting of maximal 60% plant-based protein and an optimal essential amino acid content in adult patients at risk of malnutrition.

Planned activities & deliverables

An 18-month project will be executed by a project team including a project leader and dietitian: Month 1-6 (step 1): project set-up and data collection to assess dieticians' knowledge gaps and practical needs. Month 7-12 (step 2): analysis of regular and enriched diets as well as medical foods for protein quantity and quality using the Alpha tool. Month 13-16: expert knowledge- and practical synthesis based on step 1 and 2 to develop a practical tool for dieticians based on their needs (e.g. factsheet, example menu's or recipes, step-by-step plan, or decision tree). Month 16-18: dissemination through (inter)national and internal dietician networks.

Resources & enablers

€ 40.000 in total incl VAT: € 26.000 for 18 months for project management and organization (including project leader and group members); € 7.000 for use Alpha tool (https://alpha-tool.eu/); € 7.000 for dissemination, PR and incorporation into networks of Nutrition and Healthcare Alliance (NHA) and Dutch Malnutrition Center of Expertise (DMCE). Key enablers include ample experience and collaboration with WUR-Alpha tool developers and access to extensive dieticians networks.

Success factors, outcomes and expected impact

The Netherlands is a global leader in protein transition and implementing nutrition as part of medical treatment. The NHA and DMCE multidisciplinary networks include professionals and representatives of the various stakeholders needed to develop and disseminate the practical tool. The practical tool will be freely accessible via NHA and DMCE websites, with professional and patient organizations be able to link to it. This project will provide dieticians with an essential resource to support the protein transition while maintaining medical responsibility for patients at risk of malnutrition.

Results/outcomes & expected impact

This innovative project will result in a practical tool tailored to dieticians' needs to enable the protein transition towards 60% plant-based proteins for adult patients at risk of malnutrition. The Netherlands is a frontrunner in the protein transition in healthcare worldwide. Results can be exported to other countries as it is a global issue how to ensure a medically responsible protein transition for patients at risk of malnutrition. This will feed essential knowledge on the protein transition and thereby have a direct impact on optimal nutritional care for patients.

The NHA and DMCE have broad multidisciplinary networks that include professionals and representatives of the various stakeholders needed to develop, test and disseminate the tool. The online tool will be made freely accessible via websites of NHA and DMCE in Dutch and English, which professionals and patient organizations can link to on their own websites.

[X] **Please tick to confirm the PEN letter of endorsement is attached. Incomplete submissions will not be considered.**