Driving Policy into Practice: A National Digital Platform for Mandatory Nutritional Screening in Public Hospitals

Project team: On behalf of GrESPEN's Board, Prof. Michael Chourdakis
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Hellenic Society for Medical/Clinical Nutrition & Metabolism (GrESPEN)
AFFILIATED MEMBER OF ESPEN FOR GREECE

Description of the initiative

- **Background/context:** Building upon GrESPEN's successful advocacy that led to the 2012 and 2017 legislations establishing Clinical Nutrition Departments (CND) and Nutrition Support Teams (NST) , we recently achieved a major milestone: a newly enacted legislation mandating nutritional screening across all Greek public hospitals. However, translating legislative success into everyday clinical reality remains a critical bottleneck, as ensuring widespread hospital compliance is extremely challenging. To address this gap, we are developing a digital platform designed to seamlessly standardize nutritional screening into routine hospital workflows, thereby guaranteeing effective implementation, enhancing nutritional support, and ultimately improving patient outcomes.
- **Rationale for the initiative:** While Greece has established a robust legislative framework for nutrition, public hospitals struggle with practical implementation due to fragmented and inconsistent screening methodologies. Consequently, a significant number of at-risk patients remain undetected and without appropriate nutritional intervention. This systemic failure leads to exacerbated clinical outcomes and preventable financial burdens on the national healthcare system.
- **Objectives and scope:** Our primary objective is to bridge the gap between policy and clinical practice. We aim to achieve this by deploying an integrated digital platform that not only simplifies the screening process but also embeds it directly into existing hospital IT systems and standard operating procedures.

Planned activities & deliverables

- **Outline the steps of the project management plan:**

1. Research and data collection: Organisation of scientific events, and participation inresearch projects (incl. NutritionDay) and campaigns. **(completed)**
2. Building alliances: GrESPEN's Board (one member of which is member of the Greek parliament), engaged in discussions with stakeholders, policy makers and representatives from the Ministry of Health, presenting evidence on the prevalence and impact of malnutrition to advocate for the importance of nutritional screening in hospitals. **(completed)**
3. Drafting the legislation

The law includes: a) the implementation of universal nutritional screening **(completed)**
b) the standardisation of serving sizes and meals (e.g., standard, low/high PRO, low/high fiber) provided in hospitals **(in progress)**

4. Enactment of the law **(partially completed, with the portions standardization in progress)**
5. Development of the Digital Platform: Creation of a user-friendly digital platform to automate the nutritional screening process in hospitals. **(in progress)**
6. Pilot Testing & Feedback Collection: Testing the platforms in selected hospitals to evaluate its functionality. **(next step)**
7. Full implementation of the digital platform across all hospitals that receive reimbursement from the national insurance funding. **(next step)**

- **What are the concrete deliverables of the project?**
  A digital platform for nutritional screening & standardisation of portioning and meal categories in hospitals.
- **What progress and achievements are possible in the next 12 and 24 months?**
  - **1-12 months:** Finalization of the platform's technical development, execution of the pilot testing phase in designated hospitals, and iterative refinement based on direct feedback from healthcare professionals.
  - **12-24 months:** Comprehensive national scale-up, embedding the digital solution into the infrastructure of all public hospitals.

Resources & enablers

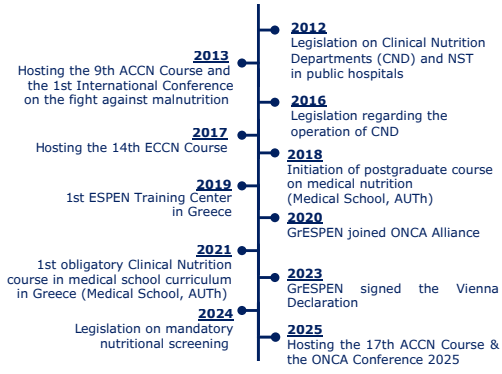
- **Describe personnel, financial needs, and disclose any other fundings in relation to the project (confirmed, planned or potential)**

Administrative assistant: Responsible for coordinating and facilitating administrative tasks related to the project, assisting in organizing events, managing documentation, and liaising with stakeholders
Platfrom Development Team: Responsible for the creation of the platform.

- **Specify how the grant will be spent**

Salaries: 24,000 euros
Platform development: 10,000 euros
Material: 6,000 euros

- **What factors will make it successful?**
  - Seamless interoperability with existing hospital IT systems and structured user feedback will ensure high clinical adoption rates.
  - Standardized digital screening guarantees the timely identification of malnutrition, enabling medical staff to implement data-driven, personalized nutritional interventions.
  - By bridging the gap between legislation and digital health, this platform provides a validated, scalable blueprint for other nations facing similar challenges in combating malnutrition.



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Additionally: Participation in nDay since 2011, Translation of Blue Book, Organisation of the 1st & 2nd Hands-on Workshops on Enteral & Parenteral Nutrition

Results/outcomes & expected impact

- **How will the findings be implemented?**

Implementation will be driven through strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Health, hospital administrators, and frontline clinical staff. The ultimate objective is to embed this digital platform as the national standard for mandatory nutritional screening, ensuring the systematic and early diagnosis of malnutrition across the Greek public health sector.

- **How will this project advance nutritional care in clinical practice in one or more of the following areas of clinical nutrition?**

This project advances the management of Disease-Related Malnutrition (DRM) by operationalizing universal screening protocols. By embedding a standardized digital workflow into daily clinical practice, it ensures the immediate and systematic identification of at-risk patients. This transforms screening from a theoretical legal mandate into an actionable clinical starting point, seamlessly bridging the gap between early detection and prompt, personalized nutritional interventions.

- **Is the project transferable to other care settings / geographical regions?**

Yes. The project serves as a highly scalable and validated blueprint. The strategic integration of digital screening platforms to enforce national health policies can be easily adapted and exported to other healthcare systems or countries facing similar challenges in implementing clinical nutrition guidelines.

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

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