# Focus on Students: A Novel Approach to Fight against Malnutrition

## Seeding a Fertile Land: A Little Effort before Graduation Can Open a Big Window to Awareness of Malnutrition

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### Description of the initiative

KEPAN, in Turkey, has developed a highly focused strategy to increase the awareness of students in medical, nutrition and dietetics, nursing, and pharmacy faculties, who will be the future health specialists, on malnutrition with the following target plans: 1) organizing the Clinical Nutrition Congress for Students; 2) implementation of nutrition sessions in student congresses organized by students and held with high participation; 3) seeding a multidisciplinary approach among students who will be the part of a nutrition team; 4) provision of the preGLLL programme in Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism of ESPEN in these faculties as an additional education module; and 5) integration of nutrition into the curriculum of medical, nursing, and pharmacy faculties as well as increasing the number of clinical nutrition lectures in nutrition and dietetics faculties with the cooperation of the Council of Higher Education of Turkey.

### Rationale / Background of the initiative

Since 1993, KEPAN has conducted training activities on clinical nutrition. Despite these efforts, the awareness of health specialists on malnutrition could not be improved sufficiently. According to a comprehensive malnutrition study in Turkey, the rate of patients with nutritional risk receiving nutritional support was 51.8% [*Korfali et al., Clin Nutr. 2009;28:533-7*]. If the importance of malnutrition is not understood sufficiently and not involved in practice during formal learning, attempts to increase awareness of malnutrition thereafter would remain unsatisfactory. In addition to their heavy educational program, it is decided to build a strong approach for students to increase the awareness of nutrition. Accordingly, with the plans that will be put into practice within this initiative, the ultimate goal is to increase the awareness of students on malnutrition and importance of nutritional support and multidisciplinary team approach.

### Scope of project, activities, implementation

Within this scope, KEPAN conducted the first Clinical Nutrition Congress for Students, which was held between 18-19 March, 2016 in Ankara, Turkey, for the awareness of malnutrition and the importance of nutritional support. Malnutrition, team approach, basics of parenteral and enteral nutrition were presented by the medical doctors, dieticians, nurses, and pharmacists. Case studies on geriatric, oncological, surgical, and intensive care unit patients were presented by students and discussed with the participants interactively. In order to assess the knowledge and approach of students as well as their awareness about clinical nutrition, a questionnaire was applied both at the beginning and at the end of the Congress. As a second purpose of implementing clinical nutrition sessions in student congresses organized by students, we reached more than 500 students in a Clinical Nutrition Panel which was implemented into the Hacettepe University Student Congress held on April 08, 2016 in Ankara, Turkey.

### Results / Outcomes, Conclusions

A total of 407 students participated in the Clinical Nutrition Congress for Students from 13 different provinces of Turkey. Data analysis was performed on 143 students (females, 87.9%) completing the Congress. More than half of the students (56.3%) were in the opinion that their knowledge on clinical nutrition was intermediate. While the rate of wrongly answered questions was 20.4% before the Congress, it was reduced to 8.3% after the Congress, which accounts for a decrease by approximately 60% in the rate of wrongly answered questions. Considering only medical faculty students, while the rate of wrongly answered questions was 30.9% before the Congress, it was reduced to 8.4% after the Congress, which accounts for a decrease by approximately 73% in the rate of wrongly answered questions. Achieving such improvements in the wrongly answered questions led us to propose that this initiative would provide higher achievements particularly for those (i.e. medical, nursing school, and pharmacy students) not receiving clinical nutrition lectures during their formal learning.

Accordingly, this encourages us to achieve our future goals:

- To reach more than 5000 students from relevant faculties through the Clinical Nutrition Congress for Students that will be organized across Turkey in the next 3 years,
- To integrate nutrition sessions into at least 20 medical student congresses organized by students,
- To re-evaluate the awareness of students participated in the congresses on clinical nutrition in a 3-year period,
- To provide the preGLLL modules for students in the universities with the cooperation of the Council of Higher Education of Turkey,
- To work with stakeholders to integrate nutrition into the curriculum of relevant faculties with the cooperation of the Council of Higher Education of Turkey.



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