

Fighting malnutrition in Portugal: a critical variable in the health of Portugal



Prevention and treatment of malnutrition in Portugal

Internal Medicine Task Force from APNEP
Ricardo Marinho – ricardocsmarinho@gmail.com
Teresa Amaral

Description of the initiative

The Portuguese Society of Enteral and Parenteral Nutrition (APNEP) aims to fight malnutrition in Portugal.

Objective

To improve early recognition, prevention and treatment of disease-related malnutrition (DRM) and underlying risk factors in Portuguese hospitalized patients.

Rationale/Background of the initiative

Timely and effective identification, prevention and treatment of DRM and its risk factors in hospitalized patients on the national level is needed. Systematic screening and assessment, and triaging for interdisciplinary interventions, such as control of nutrition-impact symptoms and/or artificial nutrition support, will improve nutritional status, clinical outcome and cost-effectiveness of treatment regimens. Data collection and developing policy on the national level will help increasing awareness and changing underlying attitudes towards risk for DRM among healthcare professionals (e.g. physicians, nurses) in Portuguese hospitals.

Scope of project, activities, implementation

The Portuguese hospital setting will be the venue, and will include patients and healthcare professionals. This will be carried out by implementation of a systematic approach. Hospital wards with 'high risk patients' will be targeted first. Results in these wards will serve as best practice for further implementation of the approach across Portugal.

The Portuguese approach - 10 principles:

1. Raise a multidisciplinary Portuguese Malnutrition Steering Group.
2. Create awareness on DRM by collecting data on prevalence of DRM, its risk factors and required interventions, in patients admitted to internal medicine wards.
3. Collecting data on prevalence of DRM, its risk factors and required interventions in other 'high risk' wards, e.g. Oncology, Geriatrics.
4. Develop a national Strategic Plan to fight malnutrition, in collaboration with Portuguese Ministry of Health.
5. Screening as a mandatory quality indicator (screening within the first 24-48 hours of hospital admission in all hospitals in Portugal).
6. Develop Portuguese Guideline on Screening and Assessment of DRM.
7. Training programs and workshops.
8. Implementation of projects to systematically and routinely screen, assess and monitor DRM and its risk factors.
9. Toolkits with freely accessible, quick and easy, ready-to-use tools: e.g. presentations, patient materials, best practices.
10. Interdisciplinary project teams in all hospitals.

Resources

- Data collection, analyses and publications of the collected data, training healthcare professionals according to the latest evidence and coordination of guideline development (€25,000)
 - Equipment: e.g. study materials, toolkit, printed guideline, flyers/brochures, website (€5,000)
- APNEP will provide additional funding if needed if the project is rewarded with the MNI Grant.

Results

The Internal Medicine Task Force is in charge of the step 2 and is creating a training course directed to DRM in the Internal Medicine context. A cross-sectional multicentre is currently underway, data started being collected at January 2017, which already collected 500 patients, and planned to go until 1500 patients, in at least 30 hospitals across Portugal. The study will be terminated by the end of 2017, and the course will start by January of 2018.