

NUTRITIONAL ASSESMENT AND SUPPORT ON ALL LEVELS OF HEALTH SYSTEM

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Description of the initiative

With the goal of integrating the clinical nutrition pathway into all levels of the health system, the systematic screening for malnutrition and nutritional disorders followed by nutritional assessment, appropriate treatment and monitoring must be implemented at all levels of the health system. Since 2004 we have been working to develop the model of nutritional care on the secondary and tertiary level of health care (hospitals). In 2015 we launched a clinical pathway of nutritional care in hospitals. In 2016 we intensified activities on primary health care level and did a pilot study that showed that 15% of patients were at risk for malnutrition, and 7% of these were at high risk (Chart 1). When looking only at chronic patients, there were 37% of patients at risk for malnutrition, with 20% of these at high risk (Chart 2).

Chart 1: Nutritional risk MUST – all visits

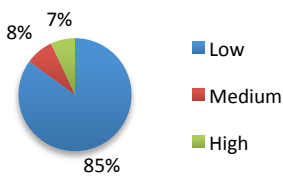
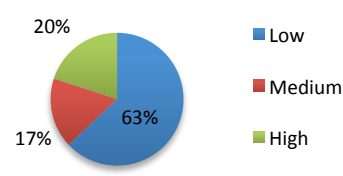


Chart 2: Nutritional risk MUST – chronic patients



The results showed that a screening program and early intervention at the primary health care level can provide nutritional support to the most vulnerable groups of the population. In order to be able to offer these groups of patients the best nutritional care, we need to combine clinical pathways on both health care levels and integrate it in both directions.

Planned activities & deliverables

On the basis of our previous findings we implemented nutritional screening and the possibility of nutritional evaluation and therapy in our primary health care level. Our next goal is to prepare the model that would combine both clinical pathways; that already well established one on the secondary health care level and the newly acquired one on the primary health care level.

In addition, our plan for the next two years is that the united system would be integrated in both directions; so that we can follow the patients from primary to secondary health care level and the other way around.

Resources & enablers

The project is part of the Slovene action plan in 2017 – 2019 of National resolution on How to improve nutritional care in all levels of the health system and will be partially supported by financial aid from the Slovenian government (Ministry of health). Personnel with different health educational backgrounds will cooperate in the project, like general practitioners (GPs), registered nurses, community nurses from primary health care and clinical nutrition specialists, graduated nurses and clinical dietitians from secondary health care level. The money will be spent for extensive education of the involved personnel and for the implementation of the clinical pathways on all health care levels.

Results/outcomes & expected impact

With our previous study we have showed that nationwide nutritional screening on a primary health care level is needed and we are now further trying to create a model to combine clinical nutrition pathways and nutritional support system at all levels of the healthcare system. The Ministry of health has recognized the importance of early recognition and treatment of malnutrition via a unified model of the clinical pathways and is offering financial support. We expect that in the next two years we could establish an integrated system of nutritional assesment and support on all health care levels in Slovenia with the model, which could later help to implement optimal nutritional care in other countries.