

OPTIMIZING ARTIFICIAL NUTRITION SUPPORT IN PORTUGAL

Associação Portuguesa de Nutrição Entérica e Parentérica (APNEP)



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Background:

- There is no mandatory requirement for nutritional screening of patients within 24 hours of admission into Portuguese hospitals. Therefore, an adequate nutritional care plan is not implemented in due time.
- Currently, there is no legislation in Portugal that regulates outpatients' artificial nutrition support, so access to this assistance is limited and expensive, leading to an increase in the length of hospital stay and recurring hospitalization for those patients who require this kind of support.
- The Portuguese Society of Enteral and Parenteral Nutrition (APNEP) has been pressuring/lobbying the government for over fifteen years to no avail regarding this matter.

Objective: The Portuguese Society of Enteral and Parenteral Nutrition (APNEP) aims to optimize artificial nutrition support in Portugal.

Scope: In 2017, a dossier was compiled outlining the importance of **mandatory nutritional screening** of patients within 24 hours of admission into Portuguese hospitals. It also detailed which patients **required artificial nutrition support at home** and the estimated cost of this funding. Subsequently, a plan for outpatient nutrition support was designed, to be implemented over a period of seven years starting in 2018.

Planned activities & deliverables

- **Steps already taken:** Starting in 2017 and continuing in 2018 the dossier was presented to following stakeholders:
 - The junior Health Minister / the Health Minister / the Parliamentary Health Committee /the Portuguese medical, nursing, nutritionists and pharmaceutical societies. APNEP is in continuous communication with these stakeholders in order to ensure that the plan is implemented as soon as possible;
 - APNEP also counted on the support of twelve different patients associations in order to keep up the pressure on the aforementioned stakeholders.
 - APNEP has held and will continue to hold regular meetings with representatives from major pharmaceutical laboratories related to nutrition support (ANID - Member of MNI).
 - APNEP has also provided further nutritional support training to various health care professionals. After Turkey, Portugal is the European country that offers more LLL Courses.
 - In 2018, APNEP will hold three major events in Portugal: A Nutritional Symposium, with LLL courses in Porto (April 2018), The Annual Congress (October 2018) with LLL courses and the ONCA Conference in Sintra (November 2018)
 - APNEP is also creating protocols with several large Health Care Societies to offer LLL courses at their Annual Congresses.
 - APNEP will stage the Annual ONCA Conference in Portugal (Sintra - 12 - 13th November 2018), with the full support and involvement of the local mayor.
 - In order to publicize our campaign, the results of recent Portuguese multicentric studies were presented to the Portuguese national news media, including a nationwide malnutrition screening prevalence study in Internal Medicine wards funded by APNEP and similar projects in other high risk populations.
 - A meeting between APNEP and the Portuguese Health Minister, the head of Infarmed (the Portuguese FDA), and the head of the Portuguese Health Inspectorate was held in August 2017 where the minister agreed to implement this initiative till 2019.
- **What are the concrete deliverables of the project?** The full implementation, as soon as possible of the funding commitment, maintain the pressure on decision makers, and ensure that all the stakeholders are unified until the end of the project.
- **What achievements are possible in the next 24 months?** Over the next two years APNEP firmly believes that mandatory nutritional screening of patients within 24 hours of admission into Portuguese hospitals will be implemented and that outpatients nutrition support will be fully funded by the Portuguese government.

Resources & enablers

Financial needs: APNEP does not have a headquarters or even an office (only a post office box), and only a part-time secretary. We dialogue with our members via email, and social media. We have now 1.879 active members; we hold an annual congress in a multiplex cinema with eight rooms working simultaneously, for more than 2500 delegates and we are also fully committed to ongoing nutritional support training for all health care professionals. This is only possible with a tight control of our minimal budget. Over the coming months all the stakeholders and national news media will focus their attention on the ONCA Conference staged by APNEP in Sintra in November 2018. Therefore APNEP decided to take advantage of this Conference to implement a pilot project in

order to optimize nutrition support for the local population, so nutritional support screening for more than 2.000 residents in care homes will be implemented over next twelve month period, using trained APNEP staff. APNEP will also be giving talks to older students in Senior Universities that emphasize the importance of adequate nutrition support and providing screening and training at all Sintra health fairs over the next twelve months. In conjunction with the local authorities APNEP will be staging a week before **the**

World Food Day a 6 km walk around Sintra, with the aim of raising awareness of the importance of the food in our lives.

Specify how the grant will be spent: All these activities as well as continual lobbying of government will incur considerable financial costs for APNEP, therefore any additional funding will be greatly appreciated

What factors will make it successful? Only by focusing the attention on the issue of adequate nutrition support and keeping up the pressure on the decision makers, can APNEP be successful in its aim of optimizing nutrition support in Portugal.

Results/outcomes & expected impact

APNEP has identified the problem of malnutrition for more than a decade, but with little success, so we modified the strategy. We tackled all fields at the same time, we conducted multicentric studies to have hard data regarding malnutrition, created multiple partnerships in order to create a unified front, raised awareness among the general public by strong use of advertising and presence on daytime television. Several nationwide educational events have been held, in order to increase nutritional knowledge of health care professionals. APNEP also intends to organize a huge International ONCA Conference, with the presence of important decision makers and news media at the opening ceremony. All with the simple reason of creating massive pressure for our voices to be heard and to tackle this

problem once and for all.

APNEP is available to support any identical situations in other countries and to provide all the knowledge/experience we acquired with this project.