Implementation of the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan

Integrate nutritional care to sustain the quality of life of cancer patients

As the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan now moves into its implementation phase, MNI calls upon the EU Institutions and Member States to establish nutritional support as part of optimal and patient-centric cancer care through the following recommendations:

Educate the healthcare workforce about nutritional care

Nutrition training should be extended to undergraduate medical students, general practitioners and oncology nurses.

Healthcare professionals and cancer patients are often unaware of malnutrition and the importance of nutritional care during cancer treatment. Adherence to existing nutritional guidelines is currently inconsistent between EU Member States.

MNI appreciates that the Plan includes actions to educate the healthcare workforce, and we believe that nutritional care as part of disease management should be a core element of healthcare professionals' training curricula.

To implement this action consistently across the EU, it is necessary to establish harmonised minimum standards for training on nutritional care, building on the work of the clinical nutrition societies.

Medical Nutrition International Industry

Screening regularly for malnutrition

Include a systematic, standardised and harmonised malnutrition screening practice in the implementation of the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.

Stronger EU guidance is required to address persistent inconsistencies in malnutrition screening across Europe. However, malnutrition screening is not addressed in Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.

Screening a patient for malnutrition takes only a few minutes. Healthcare professionals can be trained to perform malnutrition screening – using tools validated by scientific societies[1] – in a short period of time.

Make multidisciplinary teams an integral part of cancer management

The inter-specialty training programme should include dieticians and nutritionists in order to develop a truly multidisciplinary cancer workforce. The inclusion of nutrition specialists in these multidisciplinary teams should be mandated in national cancer plans.

Multidisciplinary teams are vital in order to deliver optimal care for cancer patients.

Unfortunately, the reality across the EU is different, with dieticians and/or nutritionists not consistently included in cancer care teams.

Ensuring nutrition specialists are part of such teams will integrate nutritional care into cancer patient pathways, enabling improve responses to treatment. This nutritional assistance will also help cancer patients continue their treatment, reducing the interruption rate.

By implementing these recommendations, the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan can establish nutritional support as part of optimal cancer care – leading to fewer complications, improved use of healthcare resources, and better outcomes for cancer patients.

About malnutrition and cancer

Malnutrition occurs when cancer patients are unable to meet their nutritional needs via the normal diet due to the disease and/or side-effects of medical treatments, such as chemotherapy.
Patients with cancer are more likely to develop malnutrition; level of risk depends on cancer type, stage of the disease or the patients' age.

1 in 3 cancer patients are likely malnourished[2].

Cancer-related malnutrition costs ~ €17 billion a year in the EU[3].

Left untreated, malnutrition is a serious condition that affects the survival and the quality of life of cancer patients.

Learn More

Infographic "Cancer care: why nutrition matters" (2020)

Infographic "Malnutrition – A condition that affects 33 million people in Europe" (2020)

About MNI

The Medical Nutrition International Industry (MNI) is the voice of the medical nutrition industry at international level. MNI gathers companies that offer specialised nutritional solutions and services designed to meet the diverse nutritional needs of patients. We strive to put nutrition at the heart of patient care. We aim at an environment that provides fair access to medical nutrition products, supporting the nutritional needs of patients throughout the world.

MNI is dedicated to advancing better care through better nutrition, across all ages and healthcare settings.

Learn More

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References

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[2]"Better care through better nutrition: value and effects of medical nutrition - A summary of the evidence base" (2018)
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[3]Freijer, Karen et al. The economic costs of disease related malnutrition. Clinical Nutrition, Volume 32, Issue 1, 136 – 141
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