

# Development of a nutritional knowledge and attitude-questionnaire

## Background

Previous studies have shown that the elderly, who are malnourished or in the risk of being so, have not been given appropriate attention. The staff in institutional care seems to have difficulties to identify and assess patients individual needs of food and nourishment. Inadequate knowledge of patients' nutritional needs, by personnel in institutional care, may lead to malnutrition in patients.

## Aims

The aim of the survey was to assess attitudes and knowledge concerning elderly patients' nutritional care and to develop a Swedish knowledge and attitude survey for institutional staff in the field of geriatric care.

## Method

A survey containing 30 questions was carried out.

- 5 questions about education, gender, age and place of work
- 22 knowledge- and attitude questions
- 3 questions about the development of the survey

The surveys questions where distributed at 14 one-day-courses concerning nutrition for registered nurses, nurse assistants, diet/kitchen staff and nursing students. Response papers where collected before the seminars had begun. The response frequency was 86% (N=631):

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|----------------------|-----|
| - Registered nurses  | 23% |
| - Nurse assistants   | 48% |
| - Diet/kitchen staff | 7%  |
| - Nursing students   | 21% |

Mean age was 42 years (sd±12 years; 20-66 years) and 94% were females.

## Results

- Fifty-six percent could not assess energy requirements correctly.
- Newly admitted patients should be assessed according to 95% of all answers, by the registered nurses according to 70% of the answers.
- The registered nurses should have the main responsibility assessing the nutritional status in patients in nursing homes or at a hospital ward, was the opinion of 62% of all participants.
- Of the registered nurses 53% considered themselves to have inadequate knowledge for assessment.
- Patients in institutional care should be weighed at least once a month according to 57% of the questioned.
- Knowledge of BMI had 77% of all participants and best known by the nursing students (94%) and worst known by nurse assistants (65%).

- Only 44% of the participants could correctly assess the energy needs of a patient given as an example. Best knowledge had diet and kitchen staff (74% correct answers) and worst knowledge had nursing students (30% correct answers).
- Of the diet and kitchen staff 87% considered 3 - 4 between meal snacks/day adequate, corresponding to 48% of the nurse assistants.
- Eight percent of the respondents thought the questionnaire was difficult to complete and 4% that the questions were difficult to understand.

## Summary

The results indicate areas where education is needed. Continuous data collection takes place for a validating-and-reproducibility-testing of the knowledge and attitude-questionnaire. Dietary and kitchen staff have shown to be more aware of the energy requirements than other staff, they are a source of knowledge that could be used to instruct and inform other institutional staff.

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## Example of questions

**6. It is important to assess nutritional status in all newly admitted patients in nursing homes or at a hospital ward?**

- A. I agree entirely with the statement
- B. I agree partly with the statement
- C. I cannot take a standpoint to the statement
- D. I mainly disagree with the statement
- E. I entirely disagree with the statement

**7. Who, in your opinion should main responsibility assessing the nutritional status in patients in nursing homes or at a hospital ward?**

- A. The physicians
- B. The nurses
- C. The nurse assistants
- D. The dietian
- E. I do not know
- F. Other, who? ....

**8. How do you look upon your own knowledge to assess a patient's nutritional status?**

- A. I consider my self to have great knowledge
- B. I consider my self to have sufficient knowledge
- C. I am unsure if my knowledge is sufficient
- D. I consider my knowledge to be poor
- E. I consider my knowledge to be entirely insufficient

**12. What does Body Mass Index (BMI) measure?**

- A. Under weight
- B. Normal weight
- C. Over weight
- D. Under weight, normal weight, over weight
- E. I do not know

**14. What in your opinion is a suitable energy need for a woman of 80 years old with a beginning dementia? She is a nursing home resident. She can walk by her self with the aid of a walking chair. She is mainly in a sitting position 12-14 hours per day. She can eat without aid and her body weight is 60 kg (her normal weight) and her BMI is 24?**

- A. 900 kcal/day (15 kcal/kg body weight)
- B. 1200 kcal/day (20 kcal/kg body weight)
- C. 1500 kcal/day (25 kcal/kg body weight)
- D. 1800 kcal/day (30 kcal/kg body weight)
- E. 2100 kcal/day (35 kcal/kg body weight)
- F. 2400 kcal/day (40 kcal/kg body weight)
- G. I do not know

**16. What in your opinion is a suitable diurnal meal variation for a under weight women of 80 years old who lives in a nursing home and have eaten some what poorly last month?**

- A. Breakfast, lunch, supper
- B. Breakfast, lunch, supper, afternoon coffee/tea
- C. Breakfast, lunch, supper and 1-2 in between meal snacks
- D. Breakfast, lunch, supper and 3-4 in between meal snacks
- E. I do not know
- F. Other, what?