Malnutrition’s Effect on Length of Stay in Hospital

Study Title
Malnutrition at hospital admission-contributors and effect on length of stay: A prospective cohort study from the Canadian Malnutrition Task Force

The Study
Between 2010 and 2013, the Canadian Malnutrition Task Force (CMTF) took on a 3 year in-depth study called Nutrition Care in Canadian Hospitals (NCCH). The goal of NCCH was to see how often malnutrition occurs in Canadian hospitals and in what specific ways it affects patients. 1,022 patients participated in this research study recruited from 18 hospitals across the country.

What Was Found
- The best available diagnostic test called the subjective global assessment (SGA) showed that 45% of adults admitted to hospital were malnourished.
- Malnutrition upon hospital admission independently predicted length of stay (LOS).
- Patients that entered hospital well-nourished but had poor food intake during their admission, stayed on average 6 days longer than well-nourished patients who ate their meals.
- Similarly, malnourished patients who improved throughout their admission stayed 1 day less than their equivalents who did not improve.
- Longer LOS was also predicted by patients eating less than 50% of the food given to them in their first week.
- With the current in-hospital process that leads to a dietitian consult, 75% of malnourished patients were missed.

Steps for Improvement
1. Nutrition screening at admission followed by efficient and timely diagnosis and treatment is needed to promote nutrition care.
2. The whole health care team and the family have a role to play in supporting nutrition while in hospital.
3. Better monitoring and interventions to support food intake are needed.
4. To ensure referral to Registered Dietitians who are the specialists, check at the below website for care pathway tips.

Find valid resources such as screening and assessment tools at: http://nutritioncareincanada.ca/resources

Where to Find the Full Article
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