

# Five year update: the Need for Nutrition Education Programme



The *Need for Nutrition Education Programme* (NNEdPro) is an independent educational innovation and evaluation programme that arose from the work of the Council of Europe Alliance (United Kingdom) on Hospital Food and Nutritional Care. Since 2007, the NNEdPro group has completed two successful phases of work. Each phase aimed to establish the foundations of nutrition and public health knowledge relevant to clinical practice, particularly for 'tomorrow's doctors' as a potential means of improving nutritional care in healthcare settings. Details can be found at [www.nnedpro.org.uk](http://www.nnedpro.org.uk) and in key papers.<sup>1,2</sup>

Phase 1 delivered and evaluated a novel nutrition education intervention for 98 medical students from 15 medical schools across England. This 2-day intensive workshop provided 4<sup>th</sup> year medical students with the foundations of nutritional knowledge. It also raised their awareness of the recognition, prevention and management of malnutrition in hospital.<sup>1,2</sup>

Phase 2 was the *Nutrition Education Leadership for Improved Clinical Outcomes* (NELICO) project. Three junior doctor teams from three NHS hospitals attended an intensive training weekend on nutrition, change management and leadership. Each team then applied these skills to run hospital nutrition awareness weeks.

The nutrition awareness weeks were effective and considered useful; particularly in terms of raising awareness around the prevention and management of hospital malnutrition. The junior doctors found this to be valuable professional development that fostered generic/transferrable skills. These were applicable to other education and awareness issues. The junior doctor-led training was particularly

effective when combined with input and oversight from the dietitians.

The NNEdPro group hosted a Round Table Event in autumn 2012. Key individuals from relevant UK bodies met to discuss the importance of collaborative working in relation to nutrition education. The combined results of the NNEdPro work and of this event can be used to inform commissioners, providers and educators about the return on investment of providing nutrition education. The event objectives were:

- to inform key stakeholders of NNEdPro's work to date;
- to have a facilitated discussion regarding the current and future provision of nutrition education within Britain's hospitals and medical schools;
- to suggest areas for future collaborative work to improve nutrition education for tomorrow's doctors.

Discussions produced five key themes, summarised below. The complete proceedings are available at [www.nnedpro.org.uk](http://www.nnedpro.org.uk).

## 1. Medical Education (clinical and public health nutrition)

- It is important to put the patient at the centre of all training to ensure key lessons can be applied immediately.
- Medical students in the latter stages of their undergraduate training or Foundation Doctors are at the ideal stage to benefit from nutrition teaching.
- A large proportion of doctor training is conducted out of hours and it is important to look at more flexible teaching methods.

## 2. Nutrition Education (professions other than medicine)

- A sound evidence base is essential to foster learning.
- There is a need to identify what care, support and/or education can be provided for those at risk of under-nutrition in the community.

## 3. Healthcare Policy and Service Delivery

- Accountability is an issue. It is important to increase awareness of an inter-professional responsibility for malnutrition.
- It is important to acknowledge other hospitals, communities or countries, and to build upon best practice.

## 4. Patient and Public Safety

- A pivotal place to raise nutrition awareness is with the regulators. If they use nutrition based criteria, patient safety can be used to increase staff interest.
- There is a need to look at the expressed needs of the patients, that this work is designed to help.

## 5. Communication and Multidisciplinary Working

- Inter-professional learning is a challenge and improvement is not easily evidenced. Multi-disciplinary and multi-level training needs to be supported by management.

The NNEdPro group is a partnership between the British Dietetic Association, Society for Nutrition Education and Behaviour, the University of Ulster, Cambridge University Hospitals, and the UK Medical Research Council's Human Nutrition Research (Cambridge). This work was supported in part through an unrestricted educational grant from Abbott Nutrition. The NNEdPro group has also received funding from the NHS. The study was conducted independently of Abbott Nutrition. A list of NNEdPro group members is available at [www.nnedpro.org.uk](http://www.nnedpro.org.uk).

## References

1. Ray S. *et al.* Evaluation of a novel nutrition education intervention for medical students from across England. *BMJ Open* 2012;2(1).
2. Laur C, Thompson, B. & Ray, S. Short but effective educational interventions in medicine and healthcare – lessons learnt from the 'Need for Nutrition Education Programme. *MedEdWorld*. 2012.