



The Nutrition Education Policy in Healthcare Practice (NEPHELP) Project

AIM Foundation Award 2019-2022

Project Concept Note

Background

The prevalence of malnutrition is rising globally in all its forms: undernutrition, overnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. In hospitals, a third of patients are undernourished on admission and more are at risk of malnutrition during their stay. Malnutrition contributes to prolonged inpatient stays and worse outcomes, but it is often poorly identified and acted upon.

A workforce empowered to identify and treat malnutrition is essential. However, NNEdPro research has identified nutrition as a common knowledge gap amongst doctors and other healthcare workers. Alongside registered dietitian and nutritionist services, greater knowledge and skills across the entire multi-disciplinary team would be of great benefit to patients at risk of malnutrition.

To address this, the NNEdPro team, through the Nutrition Education Policy in Healthcare Practice (NEPHELP) project, have created a workshop to educate junior doctors and allied healthcare professionals on the fundamentals of nutrition.

Aims

To train junior doctors, general practitioners and allied healthcare professionals about:

- The common problems with nutrition care in hospitals and the community,
- The use of appropriate screening tools to detect malnutrition,
- The basics of first line nutrition interventions,
- The need for assessment and management of nutritional deficiencies,
- Appropriate onward referral to specialist services.

Methodology and outcome

Developed and delivered by dietitians, doctors and nurses, the half-day workshop is truly multidisciplinary. Since its launch in March 2019, it has been successfully run at various locations across the UK: Glasgow, Brighton, London, Essex and York.



This innovative and interactive workshop starts by teaching a brief history of nutrition science and an overview of the fundamental science of clinical nutrition. The future of nutrition science is also posited.

It then covers the relevance of nutrition in community and inpatient settings then practical advice regarding screening, assessment and management of malnutrition. Finally, it introduces the concept of nutritional care in specific medical conditions, specifically gastrointestinal health, refeeding syndrome and micronutrient replacement. Clinical case studies are used to encourage multidisciplinary discussions throughout the workshop.

Feedback has been collected from each workshop event and has been generally positive, awaiting formal analysis.

Looking forward

In the future, the team at NNEdPro hope to develop and spread the NEPHELP workshop further in order to reach as many healthcare professionals as possible. It will be important to establish a sustainable pathway for implementing the project on a wider scale, especially to address the needs of general practitioners and allied healthcare professionals in primary care. This is likely where nutritional risk management of disease will have the biggest impact. Other potential innovations include improving the transfer of care between primary and secondary services regarding nutrition.