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‘Please sir, can I have some more?’ More education for both patients & professionals required for best nutrition care and treatment

Evidence to be presented at the BAPEN Conference (Brighton 1 / 2 November 2006) clearly shows that education for healthcare professionals and patients must be improved if nutrition care and treatment is to be optimal.

NICE guidance on nutrition support in adults¹ states that ‘all healthcare professionals who are directly involved in patient care should receive education and training relevant to their post.’

“In Salford, we found that investment in professional training in this field of nutrition care is worthwhile and extremely positive,” says Kirstine Farrer, lead researcher.² “We discovered that baseline knowledge regarding nutrition to be poor in both hospital and the community, particularly in the basic mathematical skills of calculating BMI and weight loss when undertaking screening for malnutrition.

However, this knowledge significantly improved following attendance at study days and we strongly believe this will have a knock-on positive effect to patient care and treatment. Such activity should be owned and driven by the Nutrition Steering Group in every Hospital.”

Training professionals is only one side of the equation. Raising awareness of the reasons for their nutrition treatment with patients and ensuring they understand the importance of, and reasons behind the advice they are being given, are also vital for improving compliance and clinical outcomes.

“Adherence by patients to their nutrition support regimens is often poor and may preclude optimal recovery,” states Professor Rosemary Richardson, lead researcher on a project in Scotland evaluating dietetic consultations from the patients’ perspective.³

“Our study showed that over half of patients involved were unaware of being referred to a dietitian in the first place, and many more were unsure of the dietitian’s role. It is evident that greater effort must be made to prepare patients for a dietetic consultation so that they understand its purpose and how the meeting and its advice can aid recovery.”

¹ Nutrition Support in Adults, NICE, 2006

² **Nutrition Education – a key role for the Nutrition Steering Group.** K Farrer, M Crilly, D McFadden, C McLoughlin, S Cross and JL Shaffer. Nutrition & Dietetic Department, Salford PCT & Salford Royal Hospitals NHS Trust.

³ **Evaluation of the dietetic consultation in patients receiving oral nutrition support.** J Bird, K McLeod, K Buckner, RA Richardson. Department of Dietetics & Nutrition, Greater Glasgow and Clyde Acute Services Division & Department of Computing, Napier University.

Another study reported at the Conference studied the effectiveness of an interactive information booklet by patients with chronic intestinal failure.

“Our booklet was developed to improve patient knowledge of their condition, provide food, fluid & medication advice, and record patient experience and long-term follow-up,” confirmed Alison Culkin, project lead from St Marks, Harrow.⁴

“The study highlighted the importance of ongoing patient dialogue with professionals to improve patient experience and also specific clinical outcomes. One positive effect for some patients was a reduction of their dependency on home parenteral nutrition. The information booklet has proved effective.”

Dr Ian Fellows, Chair of BAPEN’s Education & Training Committee concluded: “Training and support for all healthcare professionals involved with patients in nutrition care and treatment – from establishing the management structure to screening for malnutrition and providing complex specialist support – is essential if we are to ensure the best care and outcomes for patients. Working in partnership with patients is vital.

BAPEN provides training opportunities from courses to regional meetings, and we are now developing novel approaches to this provision to ensure greater accessibility. Posters and presentations delivered at our Annual Conference of the calibre described here provide us with strong evidence of what works best for frontline professionals and for the patients in our care.”

ENDS/

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What is BAPEN?

The British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition is a multi-professional association and registered charity. Established in 1992, BAPEN is committed to improving nutritional care and treatment in hospital, care and the community.

What are BAPEN’s objectives?

- Increase awareness of and enhance understanding and management of malnutrition
- Establish a clinical governance framework to underpin the nutritional management of all patients, residents and individuals
- Enhance knowledge and skills in clinical nutrition and nutritional care and treatment for doctors, nurses, dietitians, pharmacists and patients through education & training
- Communicate the benefits of clinical and cost-effective optimal nutritional care to all healthcare professionals, policy makers, patients and the public

Who are Members?

BAPEN meets the needs and interests of doctors, specialist clinicians, pharmacists, dietitians, nurses, care managers and professionals, academics, patients, researchers, public health & policy advisers, service and support providers and commercial organisations with an interest in nutrition and nutritional support.

What activities & projects are run by BAPEN?

Annual Conference & Regional meetings; BANS - British Artificial Nutrition Survey; ‘MUST’ Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool & its implementation; MAG – Malnutrition Advisory Group; NICE and intercollegiate liaison; ESPEN and Nutrition Society liaison; Training courses & materials ; Newsletter, Reports, Website

BAPEN Conference

The BAPEN Conference is being held at the Brighton Hilton Metropole Hotel on the 1st & 2nd November 2006 attended by 500 doctors, dietitians, nurses, pharmacists, policy makers, community and care professionals and representatives from industry.

⁴ **Clinical outcomes can be improved by increasing patient knowledge with an information booklet.**

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