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SCREENING FOR MALNUTRITION – IT'S A 'MUST'!

***Malnutrition is a cause and consequence of disease.
Untreated it can lead to further health complications.
Malnutrition affects as many young people as old.
Malnutrition increases the likelihood of death.
BAPEN's easy to use universal screening tool - 'MUST'
- is being successfully used to identify those at risk of malnutrition***

Malnutrition has serious consequences. It increases the risk of complications such as infection, prolongs stays in hospital, increases visits to GPs and for the older population often precipitates entry into care.

Malnutrition is not easy to spot. It is not just the 'obviously thin' who may be at risk.

Overweight and obese people can be clinically malnourished. If they have lost weight unintentionally, have little appetite and are not likely to eat much they are already at increased risk.

If additionally they have an underlying health condition – maybe yet undiagnosed – they could be at serious risk of malnutrition.

There is a perception that older people, especially older women, should be thin. However, this 'thinness' may be unintentional and be masking an underlying health condition, or be associated with depression, or lack of mobility or function to access, or prepare appropriate food.

BAPEN has identified that at any one time up to 3 million people across the UK, and across all adult age groups, are at risk of malnutrition and therefore at risk of health complications.

BAPEN has identified that more than 1 in 3 of all admissions in hospitals and care homes are at risk of malnutrition, the majority at high risk.

It is therefore imperative that every single person who comes across the threshold of a hospital, mental health unit or care home is screened for malnutrition.

BAPEN and its Malnutrition Action Group, chaired by Professor Marinos Elia, has created an easy-to-use screening tool – the 'MUST' (Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool) – which can be used by care assistants as well as nurses, dietitians and doctors. It provides a quick way to identify those 'at risk' of malnutrition and prompts the instigation of a care plan and possibly further investigation. The 'MUST' has been validated for use across hospitals, mental health units and care homes.

'MUST' has been adopted in Scotland across all its hospitals, where screening on admission is now compulsory. BAPEN estimates¹ that between 30 and 50% of Hospital Trusts in England have adopted the use of 'MUST' and most importantly the screening tool is being built into the NHS's IT and online infrastructure for access by all healthcare professionals.

Posters and presentations at BAPEN Conferences (2009 Cardiff 13/14 October) confirm that 'MUST' is appropriate to use across many wards and disease areas in hospital, and to identify those at risk in care and the community. The successful use of 'MUST' in out-patients is also reported (*poster OC9*).

ENDS/

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Professor Marinos Elia and other malnutrition experts available for interview

BAPEN 'Malnutrition Matters' Conference takes place at Cardiff International Arena Tues 13th & Weds 14th October 2009

Attended by ~600 delegates from research, medical, nursing, dietetic, pharmacy, industry, public health, policy-making & NHS & social services care and management staff

BAPEN, the British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition, is the multi-professional association and registered charity, committed to addressing malnutrition & to improving nutritional care and treatment in hospital, care & community.

BAPEN is Registered Charity No. 1023927 www.bapen.org.uk

¹ Nutrition Screening Survey in the UK in 2008, BAPEN 2009; Nutrition Screening Survey in the UK in 2007, BAPEN 2008