

The ME-NU study - Does multifaceted nutritional education improve malnutrition management? Project with emphasis on educational interventions and on the Ethics Committee submission.

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Abstract

Rationale: Disease-related malnutrition (DRM) is a condition that results from a lack of uptake or intake of energy and nutrients. It leads to an altered body composition with diminished function and a negative clinical outcome. Nutritional education of physicians is vital in preventing DRM and must be improved as doctors tend to lack the awareness and knowledge necessary to adequately manage patients' malnutrition.

Objectives: The objective of the master thesis was to design and plan a study that examines the effect of multifaceted nutritional education for resident and senior physicians on their knowledge and its translation to clinical practice. A further aim was to submit the research project to the Ethics Committee for approval. Additionally, the objective was to generate and conduct pilot trials with medical students using different educational strategies.

Methods: The ME-NU study was designed and planned, and the required documents for the Ethics Committee were prepared and submitted. Two educational strategies (interactive case presentation and online case vignettes) were developed and tested with medical students.

Results: The ME-NU study was approved by the Ethics Committee and is ready to be conducted. The interactive case presentation and online case vignettes improved the students' knowledge by 10.7% and 1.2%, respectively. Both strategies increased the awareness of clinical nutrition to the students and were rated as instructive. Students are interested in clinical nutrition, the issues are lack of knowledge and time, and unclear responsibility.

Conclusion: The students' initial knowledge about the management of malnutrition is poor, due to little emphasis laid on clinical nutrition in medical education and training. The interactive case presentation represents an appropriate method to educate students. The success of the online case vignettes can be further improved. Knowledge is an eminent factor which can be improved in order to ameliorate malnutrition management in hospitals. Furthermore, it is important to clearly define the responsibilities and to develop optimized processes to overcome lack of time.

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