

# What is dietary counselling? Consensus around definitions of dietary counselling in the management of disease-related malnutrition

## INTRODUCTION

### What is the problem?

Currently there is a lack of consensus on the terms used to define and describe oral nutritional interventions frequently used in the management of malnutrition. Inconsistencies relate not only to intervention terminology e.g. dietary advice, dietary counselling, oral nutritional support, but also to the essential components of the care process e.g. assessment, care planning, monitoring and evaluation, who delivers them e.g. dietitian, nurse, physician, the qualifications and experience required for effective delivery, and how they are delivered e.g. mode of delivery, frequency and number of follow-up contacts.

While these inconsistencies exist, it is impossible to fully evaluate which oral nutritional interventions are most effective in people who have been identified as at risk of malnutrition or malnourished. Since it is possible there may be variation in the effectiveness of different interventions according to clinical condition, care setting, the discipline of the health professionals and clinical experience of the nutrition care team, or the duration and intensity of the intervention, it is essential that the interventions themselves are described as consistently and fully as possible.

Consensus on the definitions, nature and content of different types of oral nutritional interventions will:

- provide guidance for clinical practice and facilitate commissioning of nutritional care services,
- assist clinical researchers to design RCTs to explore the relative benefits of different oral nutritional interventions,
- assist systematic reviewers to fully evaluate the impact of different oral nutritional interventions on patient-centred, functional, and clinical outcomes, as well as cost effectiveness,
- control the type of oral nutrition intervention to allow examination of other predictive variables such as clinical condition, composition of nutrition support teams, care setting, family care networks, intensity of intervention, and training and experience of staff

In late 2019, an international team of dietitians was convened to undertake an adapted Delphi process to achieve the following aims.

- To establish international dietetic consensus on the definition of terms used to describe oral interventions frequently used in the management of disease-related malnutrition
- To establish international dietetic consensus on the nature and content of oral interventions frequently used in the management of disease-related malnutrition

The aims of the workshop are to present the team and its work so far and to validate the consensus statements generated through the DELPHI process. The programme for the 90 minute session is detailed below.

- Introduction (Prof Marion de van der Scheuren, The Netherlands) (10 minutes)
- Origins of the project (Dr Christine Baldwin, UK) (15 minutes)
- Consensus project (Dr Elizabeth Weekes, UK) – team, organisation, process and results (20 minutes)
- Voting on included statements (Prof Heather Keller, Canada) – (20 minutes)
- Next steps – validation by national and international organisations and dissemination (Dr Elizabeth Weekes, UK) – (15 minutes)

### **Project lead**

Dr Elizabeth Weekes, Consultant Dietitian and Senior Clinical Lecturer, Guy's & St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK

### **Expert panel**

Dr Christine Baldwin, Lecturer in Nutrition and Dietetics, King's College, London

Prof Marian de van der Schueren, Professor of Nutrition and Health at the HAN University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands

Dr Alison Steiber, Chief Science Officer, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Prof Heather Keller, Professor, and Research Chair, Nutrition and Ageing, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Dr Skye Marshall, Scientific and Education Director, Nutrition Research Australia, New South Wales, Australia; and Senior Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Bond University, Queensland, Australia

Dr Lim Su Lin, Chief Dietitian and Senior Assistant Director of the Dietetics Department, National University Hospital, Singapore