

COSTS RELATING TO MALNUTRITION IN EUROPE EXCEED THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH OBESITY

14 September 2012 – The costs associated with malnutrition in Europe are estimated to amount to a staggering 170 billion euro each year¹ – more than double the amount spent on obesity based on figures from the UK.² Such data and other striking evidence were collated and are now published in a new Dossier ‘Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS) to Tackle Malnutrition’.³

The Dossier, launched at the annual congress of the European Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism (ESPEN) in Barcelona (8-11 Sept 2012), contains a collation of the latest data, including key facts and insights relating to malnutrition’s causes, prevalence, and consequences. The Dossier highlights and validates the importance of screening for malnutrition in hospitals, the community and in care homes. Appropriate nutritional interventions are also highlighted as both a tool to tackle the detrimental effects of malnutrition and a potential cost saving method for European healthcare systems.

Malnutrition is a major public health concern but is not always obvious in our increasingly overweight society. Findings within the new Dossier state that as many as 33 million are at risk of malnutrition in Europe.^{1,4} As Europe faces economic upheaval, never has it been more important to address the strain of malnutrition on healthcare budgets.

Malnutrition is most commonly found in association with disease and can affect all age groups in hospitals, care homes and in the community. For example, as many as 1 in 3 older adults living independently are at risk of becoming malnourished.⁵ This can set in motion a vicious circle of events, including: - increased hospitalisation, further loss of muscle strength, increased falls and subsequent fractures, all of which lead to increased hospital readmissions – and so the cycle continues. Furthermore, a high prevalence of malnutrition is found in hospitals where it is estimated that 1 in 4 patients are already malnourished or at risk of developing malnutrition,⁶⁻¹² which in turn can have negative effects on the outcomes of treatment.

Findings from the Dossier show that through regular nutritional screening, and appropriate nutritional interventions, such as ONS, the prevalence of malnutrition could be reduced.

Commenting on the issue of malnutrition, Prof Laviano, Chairman of the Educational and Clinical Practice Committee of ESPEN, said: “Much of the public’s attention is focused on reducing obesity, but in some people, getting them to consume an appropriate quantity of nutrient dense food is not possible. Subsequently their condition becomes worse and their complications are increased. Giving high quality protein through ONS is essential to help maintain strength in some patients and ultimately, using ONS helps to relieve the financial burden on hospitals and beyond. Ignoring malnutrition and not using ONS in the short term – to save money – is misguided. It is the responsibility of the healthcare professional to ensure their patients are adequately nourished.”

Jörg Griesel, Chairman of the Medical Nutrition International Industry (MNI), said: “The fight against malnutrition is largely a battle that need not exist. There are screening models in place and ONS available which are a proven way to tackle malnutrition, but these are not always used. Evidence shows that, even when identified as malnourished, up to 50% of patients aren’t given any kind of nutritional intervention.”

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Note to editor

About MNI

The Medical Nutrition International Industry (MNI), founded in 2006, is the international trade association for companies providing products and services that support patient management and rehabilitation by the appropriate use of specialised nutritional solutions, including both parenteral and enteral nutrition. For more information, please visit www.medicalnutritionindustry.com.

About The European Society of Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism (ESPEN)

The aims of ESPEN are to encourage the rapid diffusion of knowledge and its application in the field of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition or, more broadly, Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism. It promotes experimental and clinical research, fosters high ethical standards of practice and investigation, and promotes contact between investigators and clinicians in related fields. Find out more: <http://www.espen.org/>

Use the below QR code to access the latest Dossier on 'Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS) to Tackle Malnutrition', or visit www.medicalnutritionindustry.com

