

THE ROLE OF MEDICAL NUTRITION IN AGING AND HEALTH

THE PACE OF POPULATION AGING AROUND THE WORLD IS INCREASING DRAMATICALLY

By 2050, the number of people aged 65 and over will have grown to approximately 1,5 billion and will outnumber children younger than five years.

This increase in longevity presents an opportunity for individuals and society alike. But according to the World Health Organisation, the over-60s are not necessarily experiencing better health than previous generations their age. Older people and their families often have to cope with chronic diseases like diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular diseases such as stroke, the effects of which are compounded by age.

This means older people may need continuous care over a longer period of time, rather than for short acute instances. In many cases, they may be deprived of the ability to grow old in the comfort of their own homes, or that they may struggle remaining independent, mobile and part of their community as long as possible.

As a result of these demographic and health trends, countries around the world are facing major challenges to enable financially sustainable health systems. Local communities too need to identify, inclusive social care systems that are designed to meet the health needs of older people, while at the same time acknowledging the societal context of elder caregiving today.

NUTRITION CAN IMPACT AN OLDER PERSON'S QUALITY OF LIFE

Aging can bring with it conditions of physical and cognitive decline, which mean older people are at a greater risk of malnutrition. Furthermore, older people often experience a loss of appetite due to an underlying disease, or due to social isolation and loneliness associated with aging. Since a loss of appetite and subsequent weight loss are often seen as a normal part of aging, malnutrition often remains undiagnosed and is not managed. Yet, as people age, nutritional status can be one of the key factors influencing their quality of life, overall wellness as well as their ability to perform activities of daily living.

For example, aging and inactivity contribute to muscle loss (sarcopenia) and bone weakness (osteoporosis), which can worsen if an older person is malnourished. If sarcopenia is not diagnosed and addressed with physical activity, appropriate nutrition or medical nutrition if needed, an older person's strength declines and the risk of falling increases. The fall can have serious implications for an older person due to an increased risk of fracture (resulting from osteoporosis). The ensuing result can be hospitalization, immobilization, loss of confidence and increasing dependence.

As many as 1 in 3 older people living in care homes or at home are at risk of malnutrition. When an older person's needs cannot be met through normal food alone, medical nutrition can be key to ensuring quality of life, maintaining a person's overall wellness, mobility and independence. Furthermore, it can contribute to the long-term sustainability and affordability of care, while supporting older people to continue to engage in everyday life.



A PRESSING NEED TO INTEGRATE NUTRITION IN ELDER CAREGIVING

Despite the evidence, not enough people in healthcare know about the benefits of medical nutrition for older persons. Nutritional care still needs to be integrated into the healthcare and social systems intended to take care of people as they age. Appropriate nutritional care should incorporate systematic, effective screening for malnutrition to ensure older persons have access to medical nutrition, when their nutritional need cannot be met through normal food alone.

To ensure an ever greater number of older people at risk of malnutrition have access to the benefits of good nutritional care and can do the things they value for as long as possible, Nutricia collaborates closely with governments, healthcare insurers and healthcare professionals to establish medical nutrition as an essential, integral part of healthcare.

NUTRICIA DOES THIS BY -

- **Demonstrating the positive benefits of medical nutrition for patients**

New data from a randomized controlled trial we conducted in collaboration with the University of Southampton among older patients living in the community show that ready-made, energy dense, liquid medical nutrition drinks hardly suppress appetite and food intake and so are an effective way of increasing energy, protein and micronutrient intake when that intake was not met through normal food alone.

- **Understanding how older people experience food**

Our Fortimel Compact Protein product is designed specifically for patients experiencing a loss of appetite and struggle to finish high-volume foods. This pioneering product delivers the same nutritional value density as standard medical nutrition to in a more manageable volume.

We develop innovative and tailored products that address the physical challenges that eating and drinking present for older patients, while ensuring a pleasurable food experience. For older people with swallowing difficulties (dysphagia) we have developed Nutilis Clear. Nutilis is a fluid thickener that supports safer swallowing, helping older people to eat nutritious foods safely despite the physical difficulties they are experiencing. Nutilis Clear is the only clear thickener that, in addition to its clinical benefits, does not change the colour or transparency of thickened foods or liquids. It helps to maintain the original appearance of food and drinks, helping to make food and drinks more palatable and enjoyable for patients.

- **Embracing the power of collaboration and community**

Through the Danone Ecosystem fund, we set up a fall prevention programme in the Netherlands, which brought together Philips, the Dutch healthcare company; a local NGO, a healthcare insurer and the Dutch Postal Service to provide in-home community care for older patients at risk of malnutrition.



ABOUT NUTRICIA ADVANCED MEDICAL NUTRITION

Nutricia Advanced Medical Nutrition is a specialised business of Danone, focused on pioneering nutritional solutions that help people live healthier and longer lives. Nutricia aims to establish medical nutrition as an integral part of healthcare, to fulfil Danone's mission to bring health through food to as many people as possible.

Nutricia's extensive range of evidence-based nutrition products and services offer proven benefits and better patient outcomes. The company works with doctors and healthcare professionals in 40 countries to deliver better care and lower healthcare costs, serving patients in hospitals, care homes and in the community. Nutricia offers nutritional products and services in the areas of oncology, critical care, stroke, frailty and memory loss, as well as paediatric care solutions for cow's milk allergy, genetic metabolic disorders and faltering growth.

For more information, visit www.nutricia.com

