

Cancer Edition: The role of nutrition

It is estimated that 40% of cancer cases can be prevented.¹ That's around 147,000 cases every year in the UK. It is well acknowledged that nutrition plays a pivotal role in the development and prevention of some cancers, as well as playing an essential role in supporting patients who already have the disease and are undergoing treatment.

Due to both the disease and the treatments it necessitates, patients with cancer are at an increased risk of malnutrition. Malnutrition in cancer patients is associated with poorer outcomes and an estimated 10-20% of cancer patient deaths can be attributed to malnutrition rather than the disease itself.² The proportion of patients at risk of malnutrition who receive nutritional support is disappointingly low, between 30-60%.^{3,4}

Thankfully, the focus on nutritional support in oncology has increased in clinical practice over recent years, with the European Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism (ESPEN) publishing guidelines for nutrition in cancer patients in 2017.⁵ In 2019 the NHS published their Long-Term Plan, which set out stretching ambitions and commitments to improve cancer outcomes and services in England over the next ten years. Just last month saw the publication of *Europe's Beating Cancer Plan*.

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan

On the eve of World Cancer Day (3 February 2020), the European Commission launched their much-awaited *Europe's Beating Cancer Plan*⁶ – a response to the need for renewed commitment to cancer prevention, treatment and care. The plan aims to address the entire disease pathway, from prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment through to quality of life for cancer patients and survivors.

The plan acknowledges the need for a whole-of-government approach that focuses on the patient and maximises the potential of new technologies and insights; strengthens cooperation and opportunities for EU added value; eradicates inequalities in access to cancer knowledge, prevention, diagnosis and care; and delivers improved health outcomes to patients.

The plan recognises the importance of nutritional support, alongside mental and psychosocial support and patient empowerment. It aims to address these areas through the development of a high-quality workforce, which is envisaged to be led by initiatives such as the 'Inter-speciality cancer training programme'. It is the hope of the medical nutrition industry that these initiatives include the training of current and future HCPs on the importance and role of nutritional interventions in oncology. The plan also emphasises the importance of a multidisciplinary workforce; it is also the hope that the vital role of the dietitian in oncology is acknowledged and embraced.

The '*Beating Cancer Plan*' is a positive step forward for the EU; BSNA hope the UK government monitors progress closely, links in collaboratively and follows suit with their own commitment to cancer prevention, diagnosis and care in the UK.

References: 1. World Health Organisation (WHO). (2018) Cancer [fact sheet]. Available at: www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cancer (Feb 2021). 2. Arends, J. et al. (2017) ESPEN expert group recommendations for action against cancer-related malnutrition. *Clin Nutr*; 36(5): 1187-1196. Available from: www.espen.org/files/ESPEN-Guidelines/PIIS0261561417302285.pdf (Feb 2021). 3. Planas, M. et al. (2016) Prevalence of hospital malnutrition in cancer patients: a sub-analysis of the PREDyCES® study. *Support Care Cancer*; 24(1): 429-435. Accessed online: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00520-015-2813-7> (Feb 2021). 4. Hébuterne, X. et al. (2014) Prevalence of Malnutrition and Current Use of Nutrition Support in Patients With Cancer. *J Parenter Enter Nutr*; 38(2): 196-204. Accessed online: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0148607113502674> (Feb 2021). 5. Arends, J. et al. (2017) ESPEN guidelines on nutrition in cancer patients. *Clin Nutr*; 36 (1): 11-48. Accessed online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clnu.2016.07.015> (Feb 2021). 6. European Commission. (2021) *Europe's Beating Cancer Plan: A new EU approach to prevention, treatment and care*. Accessed online: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_342 (Feb 2021).

Check out some great resources on nutrition support in cancer

BSNA Webinar Series on Parenteral Nutrition in Advanced Cancer (available on the BSNA website):



Part 1: Decision Making: Should PN be started?

This webinar explores the rationale and background of starting patients with advanced malignancy on nutritional support. It evaluates the different forms of nutritional support, with a focus on parenteral nutrition; demonstrates and interrogates the existing guidelines available; and provides key messages for managing patients with advanced malignancies.



Part 2: How to facilitate PN in advanced Cancer

This webinar explores the practicalities of establishing patients with advanced malignancies on parenteral nutritional support, demonstrating how team work can facilitate a smooth and uncomplicated discharge pathway, with particular focus on the very difficult decision making of stopping parenteral nutrition support towards the end of life.

Visit: <https://bsna.co.uk/pages/about-specialist-nutrition/parenteral-nutrition>

MNI Infographic on 'Cancer care: why nutrition matters'

Visit: https://medicalnutritionindustry.com/files/user_upload/infographics/2020-01-30_MNI_Infographic_cancer.pdf



MNI Evidence Dossier on the 'Value of Medical Nutrition in Oncology'

This document provides an up-to-date and practical summary of all available evidence base on cancer related malnutrition and the clinical, economic and humanistic value of medical nutrition interventions, including oral nutritional supplements, enteral tube feeding and parenteral nutrition.

Visit: https://medicalnutritionindustry.com/files/user_upload/documents/cancer/MNI_oncology_dossier_2020.pdf



The Malnutrition Pathway

For a wealth of evidence-based resources for HCPs on managing malnutrition.

Visit: www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/health-resources

About the British Specialist Nutrition Association

BSNA is the trade association representing the manufacturers of products designed to meet the particular nutritional needs of individuals; these include specialist products for infants and young children (including infant formula, follow-on formula, young child formula and complementary weaning foods), medical nutrition products for diseases, disorders and medical conditions, including oral nutritional supplements, enteral tube feeding and parenteral nutrition, as well as companies who aseptically compound chemotherapy, parenteral nutrition and CIVAS.