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# An Update from BAPEN

As I write this column, the health and care services are experiencing growing pressures; Covid cases have increased, as have hospital admissions, but numbers do seem to be improving as we move through the summer weeks. But we are seeing more and more patients with acute and long-term conditions; the summer feels like winter for the NHS, but we do need to keep our services on track and keep advocating for improvements in nutritional care – getting this right is key to supporting our patients. BAPEN has also been refocusing on our priorities for the months ahead, and, with that in mind, I am delighted to update you on two very exciting projects at BAPEN: UKMAW and Theory of Change.

## UK Malnutrition Awareness Week

A true highlight in the calendar, UK Malnutrition Awareness Week, is just around the corner! Please do make a note of the week of the 11-17th October, as we are looking forward to getting as many people as possible involved in the activities. Once again, we are working alongside the Malnutrition Task Force, and we are very grateful for their partnership. It is terrific to work alongside an organisation with which we share such similar values, and yet have complementary goals and areas of focus. This will be our fourth annual collaboration on this project, and it continues to grow from strength to strength.

Awareness weeks provide an excellent platform to focus on re-doubling of efforts in our case, to ensure that everyone who needs to, recognises the dangers of malnutrition. UKMAW started in 2018, and each year we have been very encouraged by the fantastic commitment and enthusiasm displayed by those in the nutrition community. Last year, we hosted a parliamentary event where, alongside the Malnutrition Task Force and the BDA, we conversed with several parliamentarians on the malnutrition risk present in the UK. This work to go beyond our community is important, whether it is MPs, or policy makers, or even our own healthcare colleagues who are not as familiar with key topics as us. Each year, I feel that we are able to build on our momentum from previous years, and it is crucial that we keep that building going! I do believe that strength in numbers is important, the more we can show that UKMAW has widespread, multidisciplinary support, the greater weight our asks and arguments will hold with stakeholders who can make a difference.

There is one particular ask that I have of readers – to help us with our screening survey. For the last couple of years BAPEN's Malnutrition Action Group has been coordinating a national screening survey as part of UKMAW and this is growing in importance as a national initiative that can help us build a picture of malnutrition and nutritional care across the UK. The survey can be filled in by anyone working in health and social care settings who can screen for malnutrition using our 'MUST' tool. We ask you to screen as many patients as possible throughout the week, and to record their malnutrition risk and any nutritional care they are receiving. I think this is one of the most worthwhile ways we can each contribute to improving nutritional care, as whilst we each may be aware of the situation in our local setting or even across our region, it is rare that we can build such a real-time understanding of the national state of affairs. So, I urge you, wherever you work in the UK, in whatever setting, and in whatever health or social care capacity you are employed, if you can join us, please do. We are particularly keen to build a picture across different regions, and across a variety of acute and community settings. More details will be available on our website nearer the time, and I would like to say thank you in advance for your efforts.

The importance of UKMAW this year has been elevated by the pandemic. COVID-19 and the restrictions that have been in place have expanded the group of people vulnerable to malnutrition. Because of this, UKMAW 2021 is all the more important, and I urge you to spread the word among colleagues and friends so that we can make this year even bigger and better than before.

## BAPEN and the Theory of Change

You may have seen on our social media or elsewhere that BAPEN is currently exploring a 'Theory of Change' process.

Theory of Change is a methodology that has been widely used across the charity sector, as well as among government agencies, universities, NGOs, and so on. The process enables us to reflect on the changes we want to make, and draws out the step-by-step path that we need to follow in order to bring those changes about.

I am really looking forward to spending some time reflecting about our organisation, and considering how we can continue to progress. The Theory of Change process will help us interrogate our 29 years of history, as well as helping us look forward to the future and consider what is most important. I am confident from this we will develop a thoroughly informed set of priorities and focus.

We have grown so much since our founding all that time ago, and I think we are in an extraordinary position now of having a fantastically diverse membership, that comes together on issues that are so foundational to the health of all patients today. I'm determined that we get our future priorities right for our every one of our members, and most importantly of course, for the patients we serve.

It's a very exciting process for us and I look forward to sharing the results when they are ready.

## Remembering Vera Todorovic

I was one of many people within BAPEN who was very sad to learn that Vera Todorovic has recently died. Vera was a fantastic dietitian who made a very significant contribution to BAPEN throughout her career. She was a major part of the team that developed 'MUST', and even beyond that, she was instrumental in helping develop other key innovations, and in inputting into the work of our core groups including BANS and PENG. BAPEN as an organisation, the healthcare professionals we represent, and the patients we work for, have all benefited so much from her work. She was a huge personality and a fantastic professional who will be much missed. On behalf of BAPEN, I would like to extend our sincere condolences to Vera's family.

Best wishes to you all, Trevor, BAPEN President