

Self-screening for malnutrition in the community

Background

Malnutrition predisposes to disease, delays recovery from illness and detrimentally affects well-being. Most malnutrition arises and exists in the community, and most of the malnutrition found in hospitals originates from the community¹. If malnutrition could be identified and treated early it could prevent or reduce suffering from health related problems, dependency on others, and resource use, such as GP visits and hospital admissions^{2,3}.

To help raise awareness of and combat malnutrition BAPEN has developed a range of aids for health and social care personnel working in various care settings. In line with a range of professional⁴⁻⁷ and government recommendations⁸ to help empower patients and involve them in their care^{9,10} BAPEN has developed a self-screening tool. This enables them /or their carers identify their risk of malnutrition and to seek advice from their GP and/or other healthcare professionals.

The self-screening calculator

The self-screening calculator included in this website is based on the 'Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool' ('MUST') for adults¹¹, the most commonly used nutrition screening tool throughout the UK. 'MUST' is a quick to use, validated screening tool, designed to identify adults at risk of malnutrition in all care settings. For further information see <http://www.bapen.org.uk/screening-for-malnutrition/must/introducing-must> Studies have shown that patients can effectively screen themselves in outpatient clinics^{12,13} using an electronic version of 'MUST' similar to the one available on this website.

Individuals identified as being at risk of malnutrition, can download a dietary advice sheet which gives them basic information and suggestions for improving their nutritional intake until they receive further advice from a healthcare professional. The dietary advice sheet comes from the 'Malnutrition Pathway', developed as a consensus recommendation by a wide range of professional organisations. The pathway provides guidance to GPs and other healthcare professionals on the dietary management of malnutrition in the community. [Click here](#) for a copy of the advice sheet and [click here](#) to link to the 'Malnutrition Pathway'.

References

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