

CATER WITH CARE: INSIGHTS INTO MEETING PROTEIN REQUIREMENTS IN HOSPITALISED ELDERLY PATIENTS

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Rationale

A considerable part of hospitalized elderly patients are unable to meet protein and energy requirements. The **objective** of this study was

1. To gain insight into the protein and energy intake of hospitalized elderly patients.
2. To gain insight into their awareness of undernutrition, importance of protein and preferences for foods and drinks of these patients.

Method

1. **Design:** cross-sectional study. **Participants:** Forty hospitalized patients of 65+ years, at risk of undernutrition (MUST ≥ 1) and receiving a protein and energy enriched diet, and 40 hospitalized patients of 65+ years not at risk and receiving a standard diet. **Measurement:** 24h-recall on the fourth day of hospitalisation to calculate protein and energy intake.
2. Ten patients at risk of undernutrition were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide. Thematic analyses was used for analysing the interviews.

Results

1. We observed a significant difference in protein intake but not in energy intake between patients receiving an enriched diet versus not enriched (1.13 grams vs. 0.62 grams of protein per kg BW; $P < 0.05$).
2. Interviews showed that elderly are unaware of the risks of being undernourished and the importance of dietary protein. Healthy food is associated with eating vegetables. Elderly are not prone to change dietary habits.

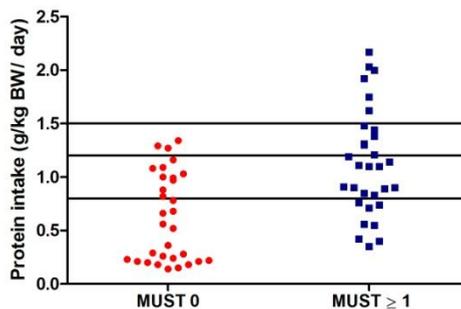


Figure. Actual protein intake compared to the recommendations for hospitalized elderly in the MUST 0 group (n=31) and the MUST ≥ 1 group (n=32) on the fourth day of hospitalisation.

Key message

Most hospitalized elderly would benefit from protein enriched foods.

Since elderly won't change their habits, we need to adjust the amount of protein within these habits.

Conclusions

1. Current treatment options for undernutrition do not seem sufficient for meeting energy and protein requirements in the majority of elderly patients.
2. Even MUST 0 patients have inadequate protein intake.
3. Increasing awareness about undernutrition among elderly patients and offering enriched foods and drinks that fit in with current dietary choices could increase their protein and energy intake.

What do they mean.. Protein??

Undernourished? Not me, I eat vegetables

