

Dietetic intervention for inpatients on fluid diets helps to achieve nutritional requirements

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Background

Fluid diets are frequently used in the hospital setting. These diets are inadequate in all nutrients, and prolonged use can increase the risk of malnutrition. Dietetic interventions of nutrition supplementation, alternative feeding and individualised dietary counselling are targeted at increasing nutritional intake. This may help to reduce malnutrition rates. The effect of dietetic intervention on meeting nutritional requirements of patients on fluid diets has not been investigated. This study aimed to assess whether dietetic intervention helps patients on fluid diets to meet their energy and protein requirements.

Methods

A quasi-experimental study of 57 patients receiving fluid diets was conducted at The Townsville Hospital over seven months. The fluid consumption of participants was observed over 24 hours and was used to calculate total energy and protein intakes. The percentage of protein and energy requirements met was compared between patients receiving dietetic intervention and patients in the control group who were not. Analysis was completed using non-parametric tests.

Results

Patients on fluid diets receiving dietetic intervention met a higher percentage of their energy requirements (73.93) than the control group (16.99) based on median intakes ($p < 0.001$). Patients on fluids diets receiving dietetic intervention also met a higher percentage of their protein requirements (70.84) than the control group (12.0) based on median intakes ($p < 0.001$). Stratification for age group, body mass index and diet type showed no change in effect.

Discussion

Patients on fluid diets receiving dietetic intervention better met their energy and protein requirements. Addressing malnutrition is a core priority in Queensland Health facilities. Current models of care may not be meeting the needs of patients on fluid diets to reduce their risk of malnutrition. Dietetic intervention will be considered standard care for patients receiving fluid diets at The Townsville Hospital.