

Reducing cancer malnutrition through collaboration: phase II state-wide malnutrition projects in Victorian cancer services

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Background

Malnutrition is common in patients with cancer and is associated with poor clinical and functional outcomes. It is essential that the delivery of evidence-based nutrition care from dietitians and the multidisciplinary team is in place to improve health and wellbeing for patients. The Malnutrition in Victorian Cancer Services phase I project was a state-wide collaboration between DHHS (funders), Peter Mac and 14 Victorian health services. Following the outcomes of phase I, phase II projects aimed to increase awareness, raise knowledge and promote strategies for action in order to address cancer malnutrition.

Methods

Phase II projects consisted of a repeat state-wide malnutrition point prevalence study (PPS), two state-wide initiatives and 17 local initiatives that targeted identified areas of need.

Results

The PPS (n=1913) identified that malnutrition prevalence had reduced from 31% to 26% between 2014 and 2012 respectively and further malnutrition prevalence reductions were noted in patients receiving chemotherapy and with upper gastrointestinal tract and colorectal cancers. The 2 state-wide projects resulted in the development of eLearning packages targeting cancer care clinicians and a nutrition governance toolkit for practical application in health services. Local initiatives were all completed across the 15 health services.

Discussion

Improvements in clinical outcomes and the patient experience were evident through the piloting/embedding of new models of care and care pathways, an enhanced focus on the nutritional needs of patients with cancer and improved awareness of cancer malnutrition amongst the multidisciplinary team. This work will help reduce the impact of malnutrition on people with cancer and equip health services to more effectively care for this patient group.