

Meeting growing demand: A review of a nutrition allied health assistant role in a cancer setting



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A nutrition-focused Allied Health Assistant (AHA) role implemented in 2010 primarily to improve malnutrition risk screening rates had expanded beyond malnutrition screening without expanded EFT, resulting in decreased screening rates. A mixed methods approach was taken to determine where this AHA role adds the most value.

Survey findings (n=20)

Key AHA tasks that respondents felt offer the most value to patients and the organisation were:

- Inpatient malnutrition screening
- Day therapy simple interventions
- Inpatient simple interventions



100% would like more AHA time spent on the day therapy unit



84% would like AHA support further expanded into speech pathology



32% did not rate AHA support in the radiotherapy unit as highly as other clinical areas

Data review



Malnutrition screening rates have dropped from 74% to 55% in 12 months



Numbers of patients that require screening has increased ~30%

Conclusion

This review indicated that malnutrition risk screening remains a priority for this AHA role, but other tasks are highly valued, especially in the day therapy setting and speech pathology area. Refinement of the role is required to ensure that screening targets can be met whilst servicing other areas of high need, and most importantly, optimising patient care.