



New Study Finds 60% of Seniors Admitted to the Emergency Department Either Malnourished or At Risk of Malnutrition

A new study published in the September issue of *Annals of Emergency Medicine* finds that 60 percent of older adults admitted to the emergency department at UNC Health Care were either malnourished or at risk of malnutrition. Additionally, more than two-thirds of those individuals denied previously receiving a diagnosis of malnutrition.

Study co-author and Assistant Professor at UNC School of Medicine [Timothy Platts-Mills, MD, MSc](#), states “Malnutrition is known to be a common problem among older adults. What is surprising in our study is that most of the malnourished patients had never been told that they were malnourished.”

[Read more](#) about this study.

EXPERT SPOTLIGHT



Andie V Melendez, MSN, RN, HTCP, CHTP, Clinical Nurse Specialist, University of Maryland Baltimore Washington Medical Center, is in our Expert Spotlight this month. [Read her thoughts](#) on reducing hospital-based malnutrition.

NEW ALLIANCE DEVELOPMENTS



[Learn more](#) about ways in which the Alliance and its partner organizations are focusing on malnutrition in patients.



NUTRITION IN THE NEWS

[Leading physicians advocate more nutrition education during medical training](#), *Medical News Today*

An editorial in the September issue of *The American Journal of Medicine* examines the level of training that physicians receive in nutritional care and argues that nutrition education should be a pre-med requirement.

[Food poverty: Experts issue malnutrition health warning](#), *BBC News*

Experts in England’s Faculty of Public Health have noticed an increase of rickets, which is caused by a lack of Vitamin D, and have attributed this to increased food insecurity and malnutrition.

FEATURE STORY



New Study Finds 60% of Seniors Admitted to the Emergency Department Either Malnourished or At Risk of Malnutrition

Adding to the mounting evidence substantiating the high prevalence of malnutrition in older adults, a new study published in the September issue of *Annals of Emergency Medicine* finds that 60 percent of older adults admitted to the emergency department at UNC Health Care were either malnourished or at risk of malnutrition.

Additionally, this study finds that more than two-thirds of those individuals denied previously receiving a diagnosis of malnutrition. The issue of under-diagnosis of malnutrition has recently received attention due to a [study in the *Journal of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition*, which found that only 3.2% of all U.S. hospital patients were coded with a diagnosis of malnutrition.](#)

Researchers at UNC School of Medicine found that the rate of malnutrition was not substantially different for women versus men, across levels of educational attainment, or for those aged 65 to 74 years versus 75 years and older.

The study identified the following characteristics as indicators for high prevalence of malnutrition:

- Difficulty buying groceries sometimes or often in the past year;
- Symptoms of depression; and
- Difficulty eating.

Co-Author Timothy Platts-Mills, MD, MSc states: “Our findings suggest that identifying malnutrition among older emergency department patients and connecting these patients with a food program or other services may be an inexpensive way to help these patients.”

While this study was very small in nature, focusing solely on a single emergency department, its findings do encourage further study regarding the factors that lead to malnutrition in older adults and the best ways to ensure that vulnerable patients are receiving proper nutrition.

[Read the full *Annals of Emergency Medicine* study.](#)

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EXPERT SPOTLIGHT



Andie V Melendez, MSN, RN, HTCP, CHTP, Clinical Nurse Specialist,

University of Maryland Baltimore Washington Medical Center is in the Expert Spotlight for her commitment to championing interprofessional efforts to reduce hospital-based malnutrition.

As an Alliance associate representative for the Association of Medical-Surgical Nurses, Melendez promotes the importance of identifying patients who are malnourished or at risk for malnutrition, rapidly implementing nutrition interventions to help these patients improve their nutritional status and ensuring that this nutrition care continues even after discharge.

Melendez states: "This is not a challenge that can be overcome by any one group of professionals. Together, as a cohesive patient care team, we can make a difference and improve patient outcomes."

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NEW ALLIANCE DEVELOPMENTS



In September, during the Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses (AMSN) 23rd Annual Convention in Orlando, Florida, Beth Quatrara, DNP, RN, ACNS-BC, Clinical Nurse Specialist at the University of Virginia (UVA) Health System and Andie Melendez, MSN, RN, HTCP, CHTP, Clinical Nurse Specialist at Baltimore Washington Medical Center, facilitated a town hall meeting to gather best practices regarding malnutrition

identification and nutrition intervention protocols. This town hall event – *Integrating Nutritional Care to Optimize Patient Outcomes: Med-Surg Nurses at the Forefront* – provided great opportunities for nurses to share their insights and learn from one another. [Watch the recording of the town hall.](#)

Later this month, on October 19, at the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' [Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo \(FNCE\)](#) in Atlanta, GA, a session entitled “Medical Nutrition Therapy’s Impact on Hospital Economics and Patient Outcomes” will explore cost and patient outcomes related to malnutrition. The presenters will discuss the extensive research on hospital malnutrition and how clinical collaboration is critical to screening, assessing and treating at-risk patients and successfully integrating nutrition practices across the entire continuum of care.

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NUTRITION IN THE NEWS

[An article in Medical News Today](#) highlights a recent editorial in *The American Journal of Medicine* that discusses the importance of nutrition education for physicians. The lead author of the editorial, Dr. Stephen Devries, a cardiologist and the executive director of The Gables Institute for Integrative Cardiology in Chicago, Illinois, states: “Nutrition is the low hanging fruit in medicine - a low cost intervention with untapped potential for optimizing health.”

The editorial goes on to argue that nutrition education be a requirement in all phases of medical training – “with a focus on the link between food, lifestyle, and common disease.”

[Food poverty: Experts issue malnutrition health warning](#), *BBC News*

A recent article discusses the ever-growing problem of malnutrition in the United Kingdom. Recent estimates from the government health body found a 19 percent increase in the number of people admitted to hospital with malnutrition over the past year.

This growing rate of malnutrition has been attributed to extreme poverty. The Vice president of the Faculty of Public Health, John Middleton, said: “It’s getting worse because people can’t afford good quality food. It’s getting worse where malnutrition, rickets and other manifestations of extreme poor diet are becoming apparent.”

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