A Pre-post Evaluation of an Ambulatory Nutrition Support Service for Malnourished Patients Post Hospital Discharge: A Pilot Study
Su Lin Lim, 1,4 BSc(Hons), Xianghui Lin, 1 MSc, Yiong Huak Chan, 2 PhD, Maree Ferguson, 3 MSc, PhD, APD, Lynne Daniels, 4 MSc, PhD, APD

Abstract

Introduction: Malnutrition is common among hospitalised patients, with poor follow-up of nutrition support post-discharge. Published studies on the efficacy of ambulatory nutrition support (ANS) for malnourished patients post-discharge are scarce. The aims of this study were to evaluate the rate of dietetics follow-up of malnourished patients post-discharge, before (2008) and after (2010) implementation of a new ANS service, and to evaluate nutritional outcomes post-implementation. Materials and Methods: Consecutive samples of 261 (2008) and 163 (2010) adult inpatients referred to dietetics and assessed as malnourished using Subjective Global Assessment (SGA) were enrolled. All subjects received inpatient nutrition intervention and dietetic outpatient clinic follow-up appointments. For the 2010 cohort, ANS was initiated to provide telephone follow-up and home visits for patients who failed to attend the outpatient clinic. Subjective Global Assessment, body weight, quality of life (EQ-5D VAS) and handgrip strength were measured at baseline and five months post-discharge. Paired t-test was used to compare pre- and post-intervention results. Results: In 2008, only 15% of patients returned for follow-up with a dietitian within four months post-discharge. After implementation of ANS in 2010, the follow-up rate was 100%. Mean weight improved from 44.0 ± 8.5 kg to 46.3 ± 9.6 kg, EQ-5D VAS from 61.2 ± 19.8 to 71.6 ± 17.4 and handgrip strength from 15.1 ± 7.1 kg force to 17.5 ± 8.5 kg force; *P* <0.001 for all. Seventy-four percent of patients improved in SGA score. Conclusion: Ambulatory nutrition support resulted in significant improvements in follow-up rate, nutritional status and quality of life of malnourished patients post-discharge.


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1Dietetics Department, National University Hospital, Singapore
2Biostatistics Unit, Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University Health System, Singapore
3Nutrition & Dietetics, Princess Alexandra Hospital, Australia
4School of Exercise & Nutritional Sciences, Queensland University of Technology, Australia

Address for Correspondence: Ms Su Lin Lim, Dietetics Department, National University Hospital, 5 Lower Kent Ridge Road, Main Building, Level 1, Singapore 119074.

Email: Su_Lin_Lim@nuhs.edu.sg