

**Food for thought
and for action:**

Caring and Nutrition

Malnutrition: a hidden issue?

- More than 3 million people in the UK are either malnourished or at risk of malnutrition¹
- 93% of those individuals live in their own homes or with their family²
- Malnutrition is a hidden issue in the community¹
- Malnutrition is largely preventable and treatable and advice/treatment saves money
- Until 2012, almost nothing known about the role of carers nutrition generally

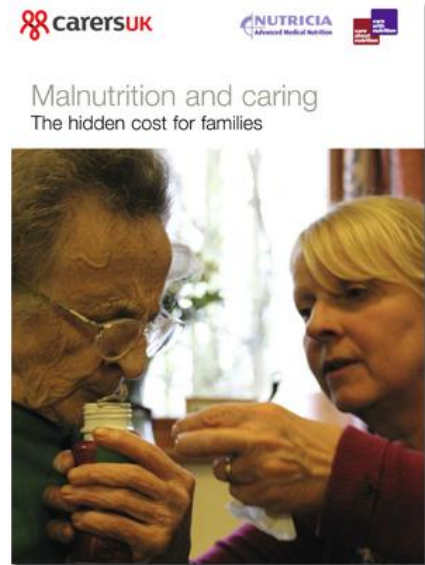
¹ Elia M, Russell CA (Eds) 2009. Combating Malnutrition: Recommendations for Act. A report by British Association of Parental and Enteral Nutrition (BAPEN)

Charting the journey with carers

- Research: is malnutrition an issue for carers?
- What is the evidence around carers own nutrition?
- Where are the issues most problematic?
- Who has the power to tackle malnutrition?
- What might carers need for themselves and their families?
- What role does Government have in tackling malnutrition?
- What can we learn from each other?

Evidence

- Carers UK and Nutricia research [Malnutrition and Caring](#) found:
 - Most carers providing over 50 hours care (74%) prepare all the meals for the person they care for
 - 25% care for someone who is underweight
 - 60% of carers worry about the nutrition of the person they care for
 - 55% of the people being cared for use nutritional supplements
 - 16% were caring for someone who was underweight and with a small appetite and were worried about their diet yet were not having any nutritional support of any kind



Evidence from carers

- Food has strong familial and cultural links
 - Higher levels of self-reported stress
 - Anxiety, frustration, feelings of failure and guilt they are not doing enough
 - A feeling that they cannot cope and have no control over their lives
 - Feeling of despair and not knowing where to go for information/advice
 - Dread around mealtimes, particularly when food is not eaten and carers are on low incomes
 - The need to provide extra levels of care as a direct consequence of malnutrition

Carers own nutrition (Oct 2013)

- 3 in 5 carers in Carers UK's State of Caring survey say they have neglected their **own** diet as a result of caring. Of these:
 - 66% eat the wrong foods because they get depressed
 - 46% don't have time to prepare balanced meals
 - 28% didn't eat enough because of lack of time
 - 34% said they couldn't afford to eat a healthy diet
- Clearly – carers' **own** diet should be a public health issue

Evidence to action

- Advice for carers:
 - Development of comprehensive information for carers
 - General to specialist info on nutrition – booklets, web-copy, videos, case studies
 - Information made available for local carers' groups
 - Facebook/Twitter social media promotion with experts on hand
 - Mainstreaming nutrition into all relevant publications
 - Helping carers to know where to get good advice and what questions to ask eg top tips on what to speak to your GP about and knowing how/when to access a dietitian
 - Mainstreaming nutrition into carers' training eg “Looking After Me”

Evidence to action

- Spreading good practice and mainstreaming:
 - Mainstreaming into awareness weeks eg Carers Week.
 - Gathering good practice and sharing that back with groups, commissioners and others to encourage & inspire change *and* recognise good activity
 - Linking local groups with a ‘nutrition’ buddy and encouraging discussions
 - Training sessions for volunteers to “spread the word”
 - Mainstreaming into policy responses and consultations regarding the NHS, social care and support, family support and public health.

Evidence to action

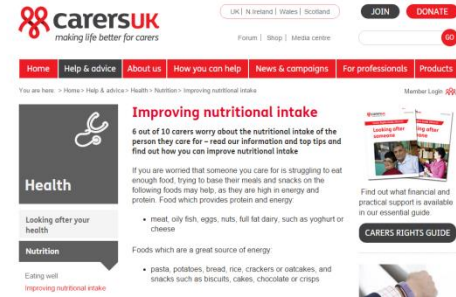
- Malnutrition Task Force set up by interested charities, professional organisations, business, care providers – to get action and activity
- Government set up local demonstration sites to look at co-ordinated action
- Ground-breaking new provision in Care Act 2014
 - looking at someone's ability to manage nutrition
 - a reminder to check, ask, act

BUT the challenge is to turn this into reality
- Nutrition and Hydration Commissioning Guidance will be published by NHS England

Through resources empower carers

Social media days

Carers Week



Action to outcome

- In 5 years we have:
 - Provided the first ever research evidence on why nutrition matters to carers
 - Provided the first practice based work for local groups
 - Advised thousands of carers with generalist to specialist information
 - Made nutrition a topic to be talked about
 - Included “managing nutrition” in our new Care Act 2014 laws around assessments and support – for both carers and people needing care

What next?

- Malnutrition and nutrition still needs to be understood better as a regular conversation in assessments and proper links to health professionals – *timely nutritional intervention when needed*
- Home-based care workers should be raising problems/opportunities to provide better nutrition
- NHS website: NHS Choices needs to diversify message – it is not all eating about 5 fruit and vegetables a day
- Government and NHS organisations have a stronger role to play to ensure that advice is at hand and nutrition is integrated for management of health and well-being
- Public health needs to take a greater interest in carers



Clear Ministerial lead is necessary
carersUK
making life better for carers



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