

Dietary resilience

how lessons learned from COVID crisis improve nutritional care

Ellen van der Heijden, Emmelyne Vasse, Elke Naumann, Marian de van der Schueren. Contact: DMSG, Ellen van der Heijden, stuurgroep@stuurgroepondervoeding.nl; NESPEN Cora Jonkers, c.f.jonkers@amsterdamumc.nl



Description of the initiative

A large number of community dwelling older adults is dependent on (in)formal care and support to maintain their nutritional status. Help and support is needed for example in shopping, cooking or eating. Due to COVID-19 crisis and accessory measures, help and support have diminished, because informal caregivers are not/less allowed to contact people (social distancing), support has been stopped by home care organisations or fear of getting infected makes older adults refuse help. Therefore, the risk of getting malnourished may increase. The aim of this study is to investigate **1.** how older adults experience changes in the (organisation of) care and support to maintain good nutritional health and **2.** what new initiatives have been started to maintain nutritional health during COVID-19 crisis.

Planned activities & deliverables

Community dwelling older adults who already got help and support regarding nutrition related tasks (like shopping, cooking or eating) before COVID-19 crisis, will be asked to volunteer in a semi structured (online/ telephone) interview. An interview guide will be developed, based on the concept of dietary resilience (Vesnaver et al, 2012). The guide will be extended with themes emerging from COVID-19 literature and from expertise of professionals within the Dutch Malnutrition Steering Group (DMSG). Interviews will be continued until data saturation. Interviews will be transcribed and analysed by content analyses (month 12) by two researchers independently. Lessons learned will be used to make recommendations and share best practices to show high quality multidisciplinary nutritional care that can be used to improve current guidelines and care paths (month 24).

Resources & enablers

A project manager will be appointed for 250 hours (€15000 euro incl. VAT). The senior project leader will support the project manager for 112 hours (€12000 euro incl. VAT) with members of DMSG and will be offered back-office support by the DMSG- office for 24 hours (€2300 euro incl. VAT). The DMSG has a lot of expertise in studies using interviews among older adults. In addition, the DMSG has among its members a broad range of professional disciplines, ranging from union for older adults, scientists, representatives from professional organisations for nurses, general practitioners with specialization in older adults, and dietitians, the Dutch Nutrition Centre, medical doctors and lectures at universities that teach nursing and dietetics. These partners will collaborate to develop the interview guide, to recruit volunteers and/or to disseminate results. We therefore believe that we have all expertise available that is necessary to carry out this project.

Results/outcomes & expected impact

Outcomes of the project will be disseminated through the website 'healthy nutrition for healthy ageing (in Dutch www.goedgevoedouderworden.nl). In 2017, the DMSG designed this website for community dwelling older adults. The website (17.000 visitors each year) aims to raise awareness among older adults about malnutrition risk. In addition, the communication channels of the union for older adults will be used for dissemination. The website of the DMSG www.stuurgroepondervoeding.nl (60.000 visitors per year) and channels of professional organisations for nurses, general practitioners and dietitians will be used for dissemination of results among health care professionals and the national ministry of health. This will affect national nutritional policies. There is also a close relation between the DMSG and universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands. Outcomes of the study can therefore be integrated into curricula of future health care professionals as well as in life long learning courses for current professionals. Although details of the current COVID situation may differ across countries, overall the Dutch experiences and initiatives will be transferable to other countries.