

Advanced training courses for nursing home staff – Interdisciplinary nutrition management in nursing homes

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• Background / context

The prevalence of malnutrition in nursing homes is 10-20% of residents and another 50% of them are at risk [1]. One of the causes is insufficient nutritional care in institutions due to lack of knowledge and negative attitudes to nutrition among nursing home staff [2]. This has been recently confirmed for nursing staff in Austria [2] but also in international studies [3, 4]. Appropriate training and education of nursing home staff and carers regarding the nutritional needs of elderly people seems to be highly relevant in the context of optimal nutrition care. [3, 5].

• Rationale for the initiative

International data has shown that education and training regarding nutritional needs can enhance their nutritional knowledge, awareness and assessment skills. This might lead to improvement of nutritional care, overall health and Quality of Life of residents of nursing homes [3, 4]. Behind this rationale a consortium of different health care stakeholders (University of Applied Sciences FH JOANNEUM, Medical University Graz, Gesundheitsfonds Steiermark and PatientInnen- und Pflegeombudsschaft) developed an advanced training course, addressing highly relevant topics in the field of nutritional care of older people. A multiprofessional team of dietitians, speech therapists and occupational therapists provides a high level of professional training quality.

• Objectives and scope

The overall objective is to improve the nutritional care quality and quality of life of elderly people in nursing homes through a tailored multiprofessional advanced training course for nursing home staff. To raise awareness regarding the nutritional needs of elderly people and as a consequence to reduce the risk of malnutrition and related diseases such as frailty, an impaired immune system or insufficient wound healing and possibly hospitalizations. The course is currently under test and evaluation in 10 nursing homes (120 employees) until the end of 2017 (pilot phase). With this Grant it would be possible to roll out the initiative national wide, to improve data quality of course evaluation by assessing nutritional status and Quality of Life (QoL) of residents in 3 nursing homes and to perform training of multipliers of experts in the field of dietetics, occupational therapy and speech therapy.

Planned activities & deliverables

• Outline the steps to be taken

- It is planned to deliver the course to the staff of 3 nursing homes across Austria, whereas the course is organized as a three-part workshop series over the course of 3 months and will be held for each nursing home separately (see Fig.1).
- It is planned to assess the nutritional knowledge and awareness of staff with a questionnaire at Training day 1 and 3 (three months later) and after 3 months post-Training.
- It is planned to assess the nutritional status of all residents of the trained nursing homes with the MNA-SF® and Quality of Life at Training day 1 and 3 and after 3 months post-Training.
- It is planned to assess the nutritional status with the MNA-SF® and QoL of all residents of another 3 nursing homes without staff training at the named time points which reflects the control group.
- To offer the course to nursing homes national wide a training of multipliers of experts in the field of dietetics, occupational therapy and speech therapy from across Austria will be held.

• What are the concrete deliverables of the project?

Extensive data and statistical analysis on the associations between nutritional status, QoL of residents and nutritional knowledge and awareness of nursing home staff and the possible positive effects from training. Complete structured 2.5-day training course with evaluated extensive training material and precise curriculum for the use by multipliers in further trainings.

• What achievements are possible in the next 24 months?

- To demonstrate an association between a tailored nutritional staff training and reduced risk of malnutrition and higher QoL in nursing home residents.
- To increase the nutrition care quality, Quality of Life and satisfaction of residents.
- To make a step forward to reduce the prevalence and risk of malnutrition and its health consequences of residents.
- To provide high-quality professional training of nursing home staff in the field of nutrition care and its relevant aspects.
- To foster interdisciplinary work between professions (e.g. nurses, nurse aids, physicians, kitchen staff, therapists) all involved in the nutrition care process.

Resources & enablers

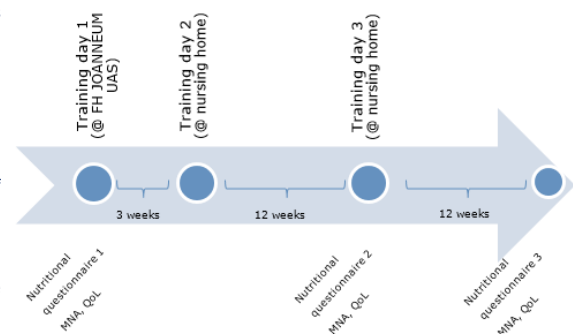
• Describe personnel, financial needs

According to the planned activities the Grant will be spent as shown in the following: **Personnel costs** (lecturers [dietitians, occupational therapists, speech therapists]; project management, data analysis, reporting; students for data collection): € 20.000 / **Material costs & travel allowance** (printing costs, licences, publication fee): € 6.000 **Overhead** (administration): € 4.000

• What factors will make it successful?

The knowledge acquired and methods learned for improving the nutritional status of care home residents are intended for immediate implementation in the relevant nursing homes. The training course has a particular focus on practical training in small groups, which takes place directly in the care home. Since the course is open to all professions working in a nursing home (and not only limited to nurses and nurse aids) it supports interdisciplinary cooperation and highlights problems related to nutrition in order to pave the way for developing innovative solutions by working with professionals from other fields.

Fig. 1: Course and data collection time line



Results/outcomes & expected impact

• How will this project advance patient care / contribute to optimal nutritional care?

- This high-quality training course on nutritional needs can enhance staff nutritional knowledge, awareness and assessment skills which will lead to reduced risk of malnutrition and optimized nutritional care and improved quality of life of residents of nursing homes. Supports interdisciplinary work between professions (e.g. nurses, nurse aids, physicians, kitchen staff, therapists) all involved in the nutrition care process.

• What makes the project innovative?

- The project was developed by an interdisciplinary team of different professions all included in the nutrition care process of elderly people in different ways. The training course has a particular focus on practical training in small groups. Acquired knowledge and methods learned are intended for immediate implementation in the nursing home. High-quality training course easy adoptable to be used in different settings and different countries.

• Will the project be likely to influence national nutrition policy? How will the findings be implemented?

- The project has the potential to demonstrate the importance of high-quality training of nursing staff and carers regarding malnutrition and associated topics. This might lead to the opportunity to raise the awareness on malnutrition and its health impact on a national wide level such as health ministry and has further the potential to have an impact on future curriculum development of health care professionals such as nurses or also physicians. With regard to implementation this initiative can be rolled out on a national wide level by training of multipliers of experts in the field.

• Is the project transferable to other settings / countries?

- The project will be transferable into both aspects:
- The curriculum and its topics are not restricted to a specific European country and could be rolled out with only slight adaptations if necessary in nursing homes and long-term care facilities world wide.
- The project can be easily adopted for different settings such as advanced training of staff of acute geriatric units, home-based care institutions, or nutritional training for family carers.

2017 MNI Grant Submission_Initiative/Research Project for Optimal Nutritional Care

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