Role of Nutrition in the Context of an Aging Population

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Almost 35% of European population is >60 yrs

The Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat
Malnutrition:
- A common consequence of chronic disease
- 38% of community dwelling elderly are at risk of malnutrition or malnourished

Note: data are based on a 2-year average from 2005-2006.
Reference population: these data refer to the civilian non-institutionalized population.
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey.
Factors Impacting Nutrition Intake with Aging

- **Altered taste and smell**
  - Results in decreased appetite

- **Oral health problems (chewing, dry mouth)**
  - Results in poor diet quality; avoidance of protein sources

- **Decreased physical activity and mobility**
  - Decreased appetite thus less food to retrieve needed nutrients
  - Impaired ability to shop, carry groceries, prepare meals

- **Illness / Chronic Disease**
  - Decreased appetite
  - Use of multiple medications
    - Impairs appetite
    - Interfere with nutrient absorption

- **Psychosocial Issues (depression, isolation)**
  - Decreased appetite and stimulation to eat
  - Impaired ability to shop

- **Financial Issues**
  - Fixed income restricts access to high quality foods
Malnutrition Impacts Outcome

Up to 3 times higher risk of infection

- Well nourished: 4.4%
- Moderately malnourished: 7.6%
- Severely malnourished: 14.6%

A longer length of hospital stay

- Well nourished: 3.9 days
- Moderately malnourished: 5.4 days
- Severely malnourished: 10.8 days
Maintaining functional capacity over the life course is considered a #1 priority to prevent decline and institutionalization. Maintaining functionality & independence in the elderly population is considered as a #1 priority to prevent decline & institutionalization.
Cost of Malnutrition

- **In Europe**
  - 33 million people are at risk of malnutrition
  - Estimated cost: €170 billion

- **With malnutrition there are higher costs of hospitalisation**

- **Disease related malnutrition costs in the UK are estimated at €15 billion / year**
  - 10% health & social care expenditure

- **Economic costs of obesity & overweight are only about ½ of the cost of disease related malnutrition**
“Nutritional intervention holds the promise of mitigating the growing burden of chronic disease and disability and improving the quality of life of the rapidly growing older population.”