

New hospital screening tool helps find children at nutritional risk easier, study finds

August 6 2014

Pediatric inpatients with poor nutrition are at greater risk for problems with their immune systems, physical and cognitive development, and clinical outcomes. Detection of nutritional issues in pediatric inpatients would allow providers to develop intervention and treatment plans to improve health outcomes.

While hospitals do not commonly screen children for nutrition, a new tool developed in Australia could change that.

In a study published today in the OnlineFirst version of the *Journal of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (JPEN)*, the research journal of the American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (A.S.P.E.N.), a four-question survey was found to be very effective at finding nutrition issues in [pediatric patients](#).

The Pediatric Nutrition Screening Tool (PNST), tested in three hospitals in Australia, was found to be more effective than the existing pediatric Subjective Global Nutrition Assessment (SGNA). The PNST identified 37.6 percent of patients as being at nutritional risk, whereas the pediatric SGNA identified 34.2 percent. The PNST was also effective at finding patients with low Body Mass Index (BMI).

However, neither screening tool was highly effective at detecting patients whose growth was stunted due to malnutrition or patients who were overweight. Further refinement of PNST could improve this performance.

The PNST has the further advantage of being easier to administer than the SGNA or other screening tools. With only four questions and no requirements for further personnel training, the PNST can be administered quickly and simply upon patient admission.

While the PNST showed promise in this study, the researchers suggest further study is needed to independently validate its use and to refine it for more effective use.

Provided by American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition

Citation: New hospital screening tool helps find children at nutritional risk easier, study finds (2014, August 6) retrieved 1 February 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-08-hospital-screening-tool-children-nutritional.html>

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