Malnutrition in Older Adults: Current Research and Challenges

Sakinah Harith

School of Nutrition and Dietetics, Faculty of Health Sciences, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Malaysia

*Corresponding author: sakinahharith@unisza.edu.my

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Abstract

Elderly population is at risk for malnutrition due to various factors. To address the malnutrition issue, the elderly population needs to be screened for malnutrition and received an appropriate care plan if necessary. Malnutrition is widespread in older people and represents a major geriatric syndrome with multifactorial etiology and severe consequences for health outcomes and quality of life. The aim of the present paper is to describe current research and challenges regarding malnutrition issues and to highlight relevant knowledge gaps that need to be addressed. Future research should further clarify the etiology of malnutrition and identify the most relevant causes in order to prevent malnutrition. Based on limited and partly conflicting evidence and the limitations of existing studies, it remains unclear which interventions are most effective in which patient groups, and if specific situations, diseases or etiologies of malnutrition require specific approaches. Patient-relevant outcomes such as functionality and quality of life need more attention, and research methodology should be harmonised to allow for the comparability of studies.

Food constituents and nutrients have an important role to play in delaying the ageing process and also prevent chronic degenerative diseases, which are today a growing problem not only for the developed world, but also for the developing nations. Eating well is an important component of quality of life and nutrition is an essential component for healthy ageing. As ageing progress, undeniably there are changes in physiological system which further increases the risk of functional declined in later years. In the presence of either acute or chronic diseases, inflammatory factors may cause alteration in nutrient metabolism thereby leads to deterioration in nutritional status.

During the state of illness, body produces higher amount of cytokines which promotes the state of catabolism and increase in body consumption. Due to failure in response to these changes, geriatrics are more prone to develop malnutrition as consequences of the disease complexity and the ageing factors related to nutritional intake. The continuum of this event ultimately resulted in weight loss, muscle wasting and poor disease progression. Hence, it is expected that hospitalized geriatric had higher risk to develop malnutrition compared to those healthy geriatric living in the community.

The goal of nutritional science in super aged society is to extend healthy life expectancy, and it is necessary to think about nutrition which can positively maintain and improve quality of life. Promotion of basic research and practical research on nutritional science and dissemination of useful information on nutritional science are...
necessary for maintaining and promoting health, reducing health inequality and extending healthy life expectancy.

In conclusion, it is important to screen elderly for malnutrition routinely to ensure appropriate intervention could be provided for them. Provision of nutrition resource kit tailored to the need of elderly could help to deliver nutritional guidance effectively and served as an important reference for them to overcome malnutrition.

**Keywords**
Challenges, Malnutrition, Older adults

**References**


