

The Importance of Hydration Across the Whole Organisation in the Healthcare Setting



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We seek to address the development of malnutrition/nutrition strategies for elderly patients and those living in care settings. Rather than look at the issue from an academic view to which there are a plethora of these, this article aims to place into context what needs to happen to embed a strategy into an organisation from a management perspective, so that the outcomes can be delivered consistently every day. We will draw on the experience of supporters of the Nutrition and Hydration Week campaign who have shared with practical examples of how they have enhanced their hydration provision in various health and care settings. As with all aspects of Nutrition and Hydration Week, we will demonstrate the positive angle of an approach to the strategy, so it would be referred to as a nutrition strategy rather than as malnutrition. Prevention is better than cure, and nutrition and hydration is fundamental to everyone's care regardless of their nutritional status. The goal of this article is to enable an organisation to identify the importance of hydration for those people it employs, to the benefit of those it cares for, and how to ensure that policies it puts in place do not become just another document, sitting on a shelf keeping all the other dusty documents upright. Organisations need to embed a successful hydration strategy in their people and culture.

Why?

Why is hydration important regardless of nutritional status? Good hydration keeps electrolyte levels balanced, blood pressure and blood volume normal, aids digestion, normal temperature, and kidney function. If an elderly

person - in particular - becomes dehydrated they face the added risk of mental confusion. Fluid intake is therefore one vital factor for all staff members to improve their own health, brain function and prevent future cognitive impairment.