



Prevalence of undernutrition in Dutch hospital outpatients

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Rationale

The prevalence of undernutrition in hospital inpatients is high. Early detection and treatment of undernutrition in the hospital outpatient clinic may help to reduce this problem. The aim of this study was to assess the prevalence of undernutrition in hospital outpatients in the Netherlands and to determine high risk departments.

Methods

This cross-sectional multicenter study was conducted in 9 Dutch hospitals. Patients who visited the outpatient clinic on one of the screening days in the period March-May 2008 received a short questionnaire and height and weight were measured.

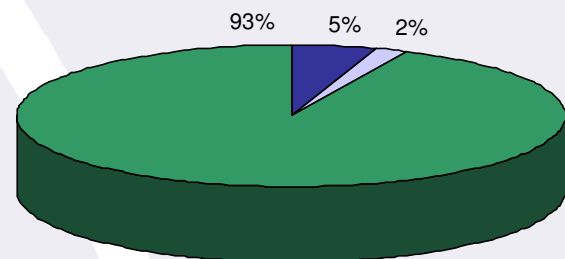
Patients were classified as either severely undernourished (BMI < 18.5 kg/m² and/or unintentional weight loss ≥ 5% in the last month or ≥ 10% in the last six months), moderately undernourished (5-10% unintentional weight loss in the last six months) or not undernourished.

Descriptive statistics and logistic regression analysis were used to determine prevalence and high risk departments.

Results

A total of 2288 patients (47.5% male; mean age 56.5 ± 16.3 years) from 23 different outpatient departments were included in the study, of which 5% was severely undernourished and 2% was moderately undernourished.

The prevalence of undernutrition was highest in the outpatient departments of oral maxillofacial surgery (17%) and oncology (10%) (Figure 2).



■ severe undernutrition □ moderate undernutrition ■ no undernutrition

Figure 1. Distribution of nutritional status in hospital outpatients

No differences in age, gender or type of hospital were observed.

Only 17% of severely undernourished and 4% of moderately undernourished patients reported to receive dietetic treatment.

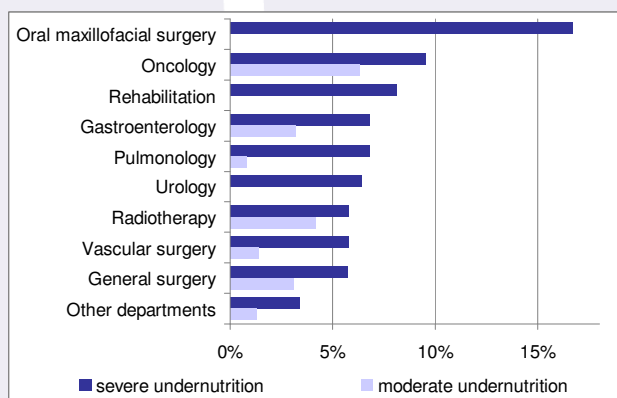


Figure 2. Prevalence of severe and moderate undernutrition in high risk departments

Conclusions

The prevalence of undernutrition in hospital outpatients is generally low but largely undertreated. Future screening and treatment should focus on high risk departments.