

Empowering primary care physicians in using principles of advanced nutritional care in clinical practice

Project team (Nada Kozjek Rotovnik, Milena Blaž Kovač, Gašper Tonin, Luka Puzigača, Karla Berlec, Denis Mlakar Mastnak, Nina Lapornik, Klemen Schara, Mia Majerr)



SZKP
Slovensko združenje
za klinično prehrano

Contact (Mia Majerr, Clinical Nutrition Unit, Institute of Oncology, Ljubljana, Slovenia), +38641281155, mmajerr@onko-i.si, mia.majerr@gmail.com

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE/PROJECT

- **Rationale/background of the initiative/project** A Vienna Declaration that recognized nutrition as a fundamental human right was signed during the ESPEN Congress in 2022. Primary care is generally the first level of care that patients receive when they have medical concerns or needs. Despite that nutrition care process is still not regularly included in primary care in Slovenia. Therefore it is important to spread the knowledge of clinical nutrition among primary care physicians and to empower them to appropriately identify nutritional disorders and treat them.
- **What makes it innovative?** Beginning with the idea that a thorough understanding of the aetiology and clinical significance of understanding nutritional disorders is indispensable, we aim to define the level of awareness of these issues among primary care physicians. The knowledge of such data may represent the basis for an improvement at an educational level. The strategy is to develop a patient-centered clinical nutrition school to equip primary care physicians with theoretical and practical knowledge to prevent further deterioration of nutritional status of patients.

2. SCOPE OF THE PROJECT & ENABLERS

- **Activities: What specifically will be done?** The action plan includes the following steps:
 - a) a questionnaire conducted to evaluate their knowledge of role of clinical nutrition in the medical treatment at the primary level
 - b) we plan to semesterly organize clinical nutrition school with theoretical courses and practical workshops with examples from clinical practice (divided in modules) which will focus on: understanding the process of nutritional treatment (as part of a medical examination), recognizing nutrition diagnosis, distinguish nutritional disorders and nutrition related conditions, the difference between nutritional support and therapy, usage of clinical nutrition in clinical practice, types and methods of using clinical nutrition in a family medicine clinic, management and supervision of nutritional therapy
 - c) practical workshops in: nutritional screening processes using different screening tools, diagnostic process and making nutritional diagnosis using different criteria, body composition measurements using bioimpedance, muscle strength measurements using dynamometers and resting energy expenditure measurements using indirect calorimetry
 - d) final examination for possibility to obtain a national licence for basic clinical nutrition services for family medicine, such as prescribing medical nutrition: oral nutritional supplements and enteral nutrition
- **Implementation:**
- **What factors will make this initiative/project successful?** The involvement of Ministry of Health of the Republic of Slovenia, Slovenian Association for Clinical Nutrition, Institute of Oncology Ljubljana, Medical Faculty Ljubljana and many experts from the field of clinical nutrition and the cooperation of primary care physicians. Another factor making this initiative successful is the concept of clinical nutrition school with theoretical modules and practical workshops where primary care physicians can use acquired knowledge and test them on actual clinical cases.
- **What strategic approach will be taken?** A full report of the analyses of 30 questions questionnaire, including the percentage of correct answers of the participants according to different topics regarding clinical nutrition will be assessed before each clinical nutrition school. This will give us direction where primary care physicians' knowledge is most lacking in and adjust the workshops according to the results of the questionnaires.
- **How will this initiative impact positively clinical nutrition practice?** The main project's goal is to raise awareness in primary care physicians of the need for the usage of clinical nutrition in clinical practice. The second project goal is to educate primary physician on early nutrition screening, correct nutritional diagnosis, adequate nutritional therapy and how to organize nutrition team in primary care. These activities will contribute to nutrition care in the early stages and preventing further deterioration of nutritional status in patients in primary care.

3. RESULTS/OUTCOMES & EXPECTED IMPACT

- **What achievements are possible in the next 12 and 24 months?** In the next 12 months: development and organization of 2 clinical nutrition schools in different cities in Slovenia; final exam and attendance certificate. 12-18 months: data collection and analysis. According to the findings of analysis we are going to conduct any additional changes to improve the courses. 18-24 months: organization of 2 clinical nutrition schools in different city in Slovenia; final exam and attendance certificate. Final data analysis of all organized clinical nutrition schools and publication of the results.
- **What are the likely results and expected impact on patient care?** Using a questionnaire with pre-defined multiple answers, the current project aims to assess primary care physicians' awareness of the definitions of nutrition diagnosis and their role in influencing both patients' outcome and potential nutritional therapeutical approaches. The final findings will be published and will serve as a foundation for perhaps expanding and implementing this educational initiative to other clinical specializations in Slovenia. It will be advised that nutrition care process is implemented as routine practice in outpatient clinics, general practitioners' offices, home care services, and primary care.
- **What makes this initiative interesting on a national/international level?** In order to raise awareness of the need for more effective and customized educational activities, we intend to disseminate our final findings to the Slovenian Association for Clinical Nutrition, Institute of Oncology Ljubljana and Ministry of Health of Slovenia. With this initiative we hope to represent a how for international clinical nutrition community how to include nutrition care process in primary care and raise awareness for the need of clinical dietitians to work with physicians in primary care.

BUDGET

- **Resources planned/required (personnel/time/financial):** Multidisciplinary team consisting of doctor (with different medical specialties) and clinical dietitians are available for clinical nutrition courses. We are estimating to conclude the initiative in 24 months. Overall financial support requested is 40,000 EUR.
- **What is the total budget of the project? How will the €40,000 be used?** The grant will be spent for organization of periodic clinical nutrition school with theoretical and practical sessions to improve the knowledge of primary care physicians and to include clinical nutrition in the medical treatment of the patient at the primary level. A cost of 25,000 EUR has been estimated to organize the courses to meet the congress center and workshops costs, to meet academic fees of modules, professional fees and promotional materials. To analyse the survey results, online questionnaire software, data analysis and project manager 10,000 EUR will be needed. Publications costs are estimated 5,000 EUR. Therefore 40,000 EUR are requested for the duration of the project.
- **Has other funding been sought/achieved?** Funding was sought and achieved from Ministry of Health of the Republic of Slovenia. Except for the achieved funding from Ministry of Health of the Republic of Slovenia NO other financial support – either public or private is planned for the project.



Please tick to confirm the PEN letter of endorsement is attached.
Incomplete submissions will not be considered.

