The development of a nutrition care pathway for patients undergoing surgery for upper gastrointestinal cancer

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Background
Malnutrition is a significant problem for Upper Gastrointestinal (UGI) cancer patients, and guidelines recommend perioperative nutritional intervention. In 2016, Western Health Dietetics established a UGI Nutrition Clinic alongside UGI surgical oncology clinics, with a Nutrition Care Pathway (NCP) aiming to address service gaps.

Methods
A retrospective audit was conducted of patients who had undergone curative intent surgery for gastric, oesophageal or pancreatic cancer, 12 months pre (group 1) and post (group 2) NCP implementation.

Results
Age, BMI, gender and tumour types were similar in Group 1 (n=32) versus Group 2 (n=30).

60% in Group 2 received nutrition assessment at time of diagnosis, compared to 25% in Group 1. Dietitian input in radiotherapy/chemotherapy increased from 78% to 100%. 78% of patients received review post neoadjuvant therapy, previously not provided. Average dietetic outpatient time pre surgery increased from 2 minutes pre implementation to 35 minutes.

Average occasions of service (OOS) pre surgery increased from 1.7 to 4.5. 93% received nutrition follow up within 3 weeks post discharge, compared to 15% pre implementation. 4 hospital admissions for feeding tube issues were avoided. Percentage weight loss was not different, contributed to by missing data.

The UGI Nutrition Clinic: A platform for patient centred, MDT management of nutrition

Significance to allied health
Patients now have access to coordinated, consistent, timely, effective nutrition care reflecting best practice. A process driven, pathway approach linking with pre-existing appointments can ensure a patient centred, multi disciplinary and sustainable model of care.

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