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Barriers and opportunities of nutrition screening in elderly patients in health clinic settings in Kuantan, Pahang: A qualitative study

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Abstract

Introduction: The elderly population are susceptible to malnutrition due to many factors. Hence, timely malnutrition identification through nutrition screening needs to be performed routinely in health clinics. However, the nutrition screening practice in health clinics need to be improvised for malnutrition identification among the elderly population. This study identifies barriers and opportunities for nutrition screening in elderly patients in health clinic settings. **Method:** A qualitative study was conducted among healthcare staff from urban and rural health clinics in Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia. In-depth individual interviews were performed, audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Non-participant observations that act as triangulation were conducted among elderly patients (aged ≥60 years) attending the sampled health clinics. Both data from the interviews and observations were analysed thematically using NVivo software. **Results:** Twenty healthcare staff

participated in the interviews were medical officers (n=6), medical assistants (n=8), staff nurses (n=4), and community nurses (n=2) with a mean age of 33.7±6.3 years. Twenty-one elderly patients were involved in non-participant observations. The four themes that emerged as barriers and opportunities were: time, patient factors, organisation factors and nutrition screening knowledge. Time constituted the main barrier, whilst incorporating a validated nutrition screening tool into current health screening practices was identified as the most practical approach to performing nutrition screening. Staff also highlighted the need for appropriate guidelines for implementing nutrition screening. Conclusion: This study identified appropriate approaches to implementing nutrition screening among elderly patients in health clinics. Developing a comprehensive nutrition screening guideline may facilitate healthcare staff in performing nutrition screening. © 2021 UPM Press. All rights reserved.

Author keywords


Barriers ; Elderly ; Malnutrition; Nutrition screening ; Opportunities

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