

## **HIDDEN EPIDEMIC OF OLDER ADULT MALNUTRITION: NEW NATIONAL BLUEPRINT ADVANCES INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS**

**CHICAGO, IL** – Citing alarming statistics that show that nearly *1 of every 2 older Americans is at risk of malnutrition* and that *disease-associated malnutrition in older adults is estimated to cost \$51.3 billion annually*, a broad group of advocates laid out a roadmap for a new national effort to help millions of Americans who suffer from malnutrition or could be at risk as they grow older. The first ever *National Blueprint: Achieving Quality Malnutrition Care for Older Adults*, released today at the annual conference of the American Society on Aging, calls for a range of strategies to be implemented across the healthcare institution and community spectrum, with four primary goals: improving quality care practices, improving access, generating research, and advancing public health.

*“Malnutrition is a legitimate and growing public health threat to older adults, both in health care settings and in the community. This National Blueprint is one of the most comprehensive approaches taken to date to address malnutrition and older adults. We want it to be a pathway toward raising greater public awareness. We specifically want it to be the catalyst to prompt a greater federal response, especially establishing national goals and improving access to high quality malnutrition care and nutrition services. This could start with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) integrating malnutrition care in quality programs and care models across care settings,”* said Bob Blancato, Chair, American Society on Aging, and National Coordinator, Defeat Malnutrition Today.

*“We serve people who are too sick to shop or cook for themselves when they get out of the hospital. We are eyewitnesses to this epidemic, how it slows healing and recovery and the good days it robs from the most vulnerable people. We are proud to be part of the effort to address the gaps in malnutrition care,”* said Lisa Zullig, Director of Nutrition Services, God’s Love We Deliver.

The collaborating groups point to more staggering statistics that demonstrate the cost to health from older adult malnutrition and potential savings from the new recommendations. Among the costs:

- Healthcare costs can be up to 300% greater for individuals who are malnourished
- Malnutrition can increase length of hospital stay by 4 to 6 days
- Malnourished hospitalized adults have up to 5 times higher mortality and 50% higher readmissions

Malnutrition among older adults has multiple and complex causes, and so solving this epidemic will require collaboration among many organizations, government bodies, and communities. This is one of the first times that a national framework has been outlined to synergistically address the problem across all points of care—from hospital, to post-hospital, to community settings. The Defeat Malnutrition Today coalition and Avalere Health have led the development of this Blueprint through the establishment of a multi-stakeholder Malnutrition Quality Collaborative that engaged experts representing organizations across the continuum of care. One of the Blueprint’s real strengths is that it offers implementation-ready recommendations.

The main cause for the epidemic, according to the Blueprint, is that the current malnutrition best practices, standards and screening tools have not been “systematically adopted into routine quality medical care or adopted across care settings.” It also says that despite agreeing that malnutrition is a serious issue, CMS does not yet include malnutrition care in healthcare quality incentive programs or require health care providers to report malnutrition as a key health indicator for older adults. The Blueprint focuses on helping address these and other gaps.

***“Addressing malnutrition is a true win-win; it’s a win for patients and a win for the health care system overall. Delivery of high-quality malnutrition care has been shown to both improve patient outcomes and reduce costs. Tackling this public health issue really is low-hanging fruit,” said Kristi Mitchell, Senior Vice President, Avalere Health.***

The full report can be found at [www.defeatmalnutrition.today/blueprint](http://www.defeatmalnutrition.today/blueprint).

The *National Blueprint: Achieving Quality Malnutrition Care for Older Adults* was developed by the Defeat Malnutrition Today coalition, Avalere Health, and the Malnutrition Quality Collaborative with support provided by Abbott.

About Defeat Malnutrition Today:

The Defeat Malnutrition Today coalition is a diverse alliance of over 55 national, state, and local stakeholders and organizations, including community, healthy aging, nutrition, advocacy, healthcare professional, faith-based, and private sector groups. The coalition shares the goal of achieving the recognition of malnutrition as a key indicator and vital sign of older adult health; it works to create policy change toward a greater emphasis on screening, detecting, treating and preventing malnutrition.

About Avalere:

Avalere Health, an Inovalon Company, is a strategic advisory company whose core purpose is to create innovative solutions to complex healthcare problems. Based in Washington, D.C., the firm delivers actionable insights, business intelligence tools and custom analytics for leaders in healthcare business and policy. Avalere's experts span 230 staff drawn from Fortune 500 healthcare companies, the federal government (e.g., CMS, OMB, CBO and the Congress), top consultancies and nonprofits. The firm offers deep substance on the full range of healthcare business issues affecting the Fortune 500 healthcare companies. Avalere’s focus on strategy is supported by a rigorous, in-house analytic research group that uses public and private data to generate quantitative insight. Through events, publications and interactive programs, Avalere insights are accessible to a broad range of customers. For more information, visit [avalere.com](http://avalere.com), or follow us on Twitter @avalerehealth.