

NEWS RELEASE

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Citing Rising Crisis among Older Adults, Coalition asks CMS to Expedite New Malnutrition Screening and Treatment Measures in Hospitals

Pending CMS Rules and New National Blueprint Offer Areas for Progress

WASHINGTON, DC - A broad group of advocates for older adults today urged federal healthcare officials to more quickly implement a new national effort to help millions of older Americans who suffer from malnutrition. 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, the Defeat Malnutrition Today coalition said that much more should be done to address the growing public health threat, especially among hospitalized older adults.

In April, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) proposed the adoption of malnutrition-focused quality measures into a future Hospital Inpatient Quality Reporting Program, which would promote improved screening, assessment, diagnosis, and care plans and treatment for the condition. However, the CMS proposal would delay broad adoption of the measures until potentially 2019 at the earliest, which advocates say is too slow given the immediate need. Public comments are being accepted until June 13.

“Malnutrition is a legitimate and growing public health threat to older adults today, both in health care settings and in the community, and we can’t afford to wait until 2019 for a fundamental change in strategy. We welcome the CMS proposal to integrate nutrition care in hospitals and across care settings, but we will be asking CMS not to delay implementation of these measures because this crisis is real. We will also be pointing CMS to consider other malnutrition initiatives as outlined in our recently released National Blueprint,” said Bob Blancato, National Coordinator of Defeat Malnutrition Today.

Members of Congress are sounding a similar note. In April, a bipartisan group of U.S. Representatives sent a letter to CMS calling on the agency to accelerate its efforts to address malnutrition, writing that: **“Given the urgency of [malnutrition] and its detrimental impact on older Americans, we ask that CMS use its authority to adopt malnutrition electronic quality measures (eQMs) in the Hospital Inpatient Quality Reporting Program in this spring’s rulemaking.”**

In March, the first ever *National Blueprint: Achieving Quality Malnutrition Care for Older Adults* (www.defeatmalnutrition.today/blueprint) was released at the annual conference of the American Society on Aging. The Blueprint called 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.**

The collaborating groups point to 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.

Blancato said, **“As we recognize Older Americans Month this May, let’s do everything possible to help the quality of life for older adults. Malnutrition is a vital sign of older adult health risk and must be addressed with greater urgency.”**

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. Learn more at www.defeatmalnutrition.today.
