



Defeat Malnutrition Today End of Year Report: 2017

BOB BLANCATO AND MEREDITH WHITMIRE

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Introduction

In 2017, the Defeat Malnutrition Today coalition celebrated its second anniversary. When the coalition was established, its goals were to achieve the recognition of malnutrition as a key indicator and vital sign of older adult health risk and to work to achieve a greater focus on malnutrition screening and intervention through regulatory and/or legislative change across the nation's health care system. 2017 was a year of strong and steady progress toward these goals.

Among our top accomplishments this year, in partnership with our allies in federal and state legislatures:

- Creating and launching the *National Blueprint: Achieving Quality Malnutrition Care for Older Adults* through convening the Malnutrition Quality Collaborative to set the national agenda for malnutrition care (see page 4)
- Requesting and receiving the first two congressional reports and studies on older adult malnutrition (see page 3)
- Having the National Conference of State Legislatures adopt a policy statement on older adult malnutrition (see page 4)
- Passing legislation in Virginia which made it the third state to have a commission working on the issue of older adult malnutrition, and assisting with a coalition forming in Florida (see page 4)
- Giving almost 50 presentations on malnutrition nationwide in 2017 (see page 5)
- Increasing our membership, with 15 new organizations joining the coalition (see page 1)

Membership

Defeat Malnutrition Today started 2017 with 52 members and ended 2017 with 67 members, increasing our membership by 29%. The 15 new members joining this year:

- LifeCare Alliance
- MANNA
- MidPen Resident Services
- n4a – National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
- National Alliance for Caregiving
- National Board of Physician Nutrition Specialists
- The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
- National Foundation to End Senior Hunger
- Nestlé Health Science
- PurFoods
- RetireSafe
- SAGE – Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders
- Senior Nutrition Program-Santa Clara County
- Veterans Health Council
- West Health

Regulatory Actions

Malnutrition eQMs

The MQii [malnutrition quality measures](#) (eQMs) were considered by the Measures Application Partnership (MAP) of the National Quality Forum (NQF). We sent brief [written comments](#) to MAP on January 13 and gave brief oral comments to MAP on January 24. The MAP recommended three of the four measures as “Refine and Resubmit” and the diagnosis measure as “Do Not Support,” believing there was a need for more research to support this measure. The coalition followed up with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to ask for their continued support for including the measures in the proposed FY 2018 Inpatient Prospective Payment System (IPPS) Hospital Rule.

During CMS Administrator Seema Verma’s confirmation hearing before the Senate Finance Committee in February, she answered a written question from Sens. Bob Casey and Tom Carper on the quality measures and her support for nutrition programs and malnutrition prevention, saying: “I agree that nutrition is an important part of overall health and I look forward to reviewing current reporting and performance programs for Medicare, Medicaid, and private health insurance plans to make sure that we get the data we need to improve health outcomes and to understand the impact of determinants of health, such as nutrition.” The coalition is continuing to follow up with Administrator Verma on her review of these programs.

In April, CMS announced in the proposed rule that the malnutrition eQMs were all accepted as measures under consideration for inclusion in a future Hospital Inpatient Quality Reporting Program (IQR). CMS specifically called out malnutrition as an issue for older adults in acute care. The coalition submitted [comments](#) in June to CMS calling for the adoption of these measures in 2018 in a final rule.

CMS did not include any new quality measures in its FY 2018 IPPS rule and commented that the malnutrition eQMs were still under consideration for the future but not provide a specific timeline. The coalition issued a [statement](#) and sent it to members, CMS, and various organizations and channels.

Regulatory Comment Submissions and Other Agency Actions

- Throughout the year, Defeat Malnutrition Today submitted comments and testimony to agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and to HHS itself on topics beyond the eQMs as well:
 - April: [Comments](#) to CMS’s Medicare Advantage call for improvements and request for information
 - May: [Comments](#) to the Administration for Community Living calling for malnutrition screening to be included in the annual National Survey of Older

- Americans Act Participants; [comments](#) in May to CMS’s Quality Improvement Organizations’ Program Priorities call for comments
 - June: [Comments](#) to CMS’s skilled nursing facilities quality reporting program proposed rule
 - August: [Comments](#) on the CMS PRO tools proposed rule
 - September: [Testimony](#) at the HHS meeting on Healthy People 2030, the department’s health goals initiative
 - October: [Comments](#) on HHS’s 2018-2022 Strategic Plan
 - November: [Comments](#) to the CMS Innovation Center on its “new direction”
- The coalition has also worked closely with the Administration for Community Living (ACL) this year. ACL released a policy issue [brief](#) on older adult malnutrition this spring, and the coalition presented at an ACL event on older adult malnutrition.
 - At the request of the coalition, the National Resource Center on Nutrition and Aging has added a [page with malnutrition resources](#) from multiple partnering organizations, including the coalition.

Legislative Activities

Federal Legislature

- Defeat Malnutrition Today has distributed a [Review Article](#) entitled “Malnutrition and Older Adults: Review of the U.S. Federal Health Policy Landscape” to congressional staff of sixty Members of Congress on relevant committees and subcommittees.
- At the request of the coalition, US Rep. Bill Pascrell asked the Congressional Research Service (CRS) for a [memo](#) on malnutrition in older adults, specifically on “(1) an overview of the problem (e.g., prevalence, impact on health care outcomes, patient function), (2) barriers to malnutrition care, (3) an example of an evidence-based care model for malnutrition prevention and intervention, as well as attempts to integrate malnutrition care quality measures, based on these evidence-based best practices, into quality programs in Medicare.” This is the first time the CRS has studied this issue.

The CRS found that “despite evidence demonstrating the importance of adequate nutrition in the health care setting and the role of nutrition in improved health status and outcomes, variation and gaps exist with respect to the provision of malnutrition care, specifically nutrition screening, assessment, intervention, monitoring, and overall care for older adults who are malnourished or at-risk for malnourishment.”

- In July, the Senate Aging Committee held a hearing on malnutrition and older adults. We were consulted on the hearing and the Chairman, Sen. Susan Collins, quoted from our

Blueprint.

- At the request of the coalition, US Sens. Patty Murray and Bob Casey [requested](#) that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) study nutrient quality in federally-funded nutrition programs for seniors. The request specifically focuses on what is known about the caloric and nutrient needs of older adults, the requirements of federal nutrition programs to meet these needs and their oversight and results, and challenges nutrition program providers face. The GAO has accepted this request, which will be the first study of its kind. The study report is expected in 2018.

State Legislatures

- Defeat Malnutrition Today released a [state legislative advocacy toolkit](#) in mid-2017 to encourage more state legislators to take on the issue of older adult malnutrition.
- Virginia State Sen. Barbara Favola's [bill](#), which the coalition assisted in drafting, that would direct the Virginia Commonwealth Council on Aging to "Assist and advise the Department [of Planning and Budget] regarding strategies to improve nutritional health, alleviate hunger, and prevent malnutrition among older adults" was signed into law by Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe during a signing ceremony in May. This made Virginia the third state to have a commission working on the issue of older adult malnutrition. The Governor mentioned Defeat Malnutrition Today in his remarks.
- In October, Defeat Malnutrition Today [testified](#) before the first public meeting of the Ohio Malnutrition Prevention Commission, which was established in 2016 with the advocacy of the coalition.
- The coalition also advocated for the Massachusetts Malnutrition Prevention Commission's formation and in 2017, all members were appointed. Defeat Malnutrition Today participated in two panels where the Commission was discussed: one with Commission member MA Sec. of Elder Affairs Alice Bonner during the Massachusetts Council on Aging conference, and one sponsored by ACL to discuss older adult malnutrition's causes and solutions.
- The coalition is also actively assisting efforts in Florida to create a public-private coalition to focus on older adult malnutrition.
- At the request of Defeat Malnutrition Today, Virginia State Sen. Barbara Favola also assisted in getting the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) to adopt a policy statement on older adult malnutrition in December. The new policy, good for one year, states that the NCSL "supports establishing malnutrition care as a measure of quality health care," that "NCSL urges the administration and Congress to support state efforts to reduce malnutrition in the elderly and heighten awareness of nutrition in elderly

communities,” and that “NCSL urges CMS to adopt quality measures on malnutrition to heighten the importance of identification, evaluation, and treatment of malnutrition in the elderly.”

The Blueprint

In August 2016, after determining there was a lack of an integrated, multi-sector national plan to help guide older adult malnutrition care, the coalition convened the Malnutrition Quality Collaborative, a group of experts from the clinical, community, healthcare, business and government sectors, to discuss writing a blueprint on older adult malnutrition care. In conjunction with Avalere Health, the Blueprint development process began in September 2016.

In March 2017, Defeat Malnutrition Today officially launched the [*National Blueprint: Achieving Quality Malnutrition Care for Older Adults*](#) at the American Society on Aging (ASA) conference and issued a [press release](#) on the Blueprint. The Blueprint provides suggested strategies for policymakers, organizations, healthcare providers, and patients and caregivers to address older adult malnutrition nationally, in their states and communities, and in their own care plans.

Defeat Malnutrition Today has extensively disseminated the Blueprint at numerous national, state and local conferences, including at the ASA conference, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) conference, the NY State Aging Services Conference, the New England Nutrition Conference, and the Michigan Senior Services Conference. We also presented on it at the 2017 International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG) World Congress, an international conference and the world’s largest-ever gathering of aging experts.

Defeat Malnutrition Today met with Administration for Community Living Administrator and Assistant Secretary on Aging Lance Robertson to discuss the Blueprint one-on-one. The coalition also has distributed the Blueprint to over sixty Members of Congress’ staff on relevant committees and subcommittees and to thirty Administration officials in various agencies and departments who work on issues related to older adult nutrition and malnutrition.

Other Blueprint-related activities this year have included writing a [blog post](#) for coalition member International Council on Active Aging on the Blueprint, releasing a [new infographic](#) centered around the Blueprint, and issuing a second [press release](#) on the Blueprint and the electronic clinical quality measures.

Other Accomplishments

Webinars

- DMT and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics hosted a [webinar](#) to discuss the Blueprint in May.

- DMT and the Academy also held a webinar in July to discuss the uses and applications of the state legislative advocacy toolkit. We had a state senator and speakers from DMT, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Massachusetts, Florida, and Virginia.

Malnutrition Awareness Week

During Malnutrition Awareness Week™, the coalition was very active, including:

- Participating in a malnutrition [Chat with the Experts](#) with DMT members
- Writing a [blog post](#) for DMT member group International Council on Active Aging
- Presenting to a group of Massachusetts dietitians and to the National Medical Association's conference

Conferences/Presentations

Defeat Malnutrition Today leaders presented at almost 50 conferences and events in 2017 about older adult nutrition and malnutrition.

Some of the highlights:

- Participating in a segment on [Maryland Public Television](#) on malnutrition for National Nutrition Month
- Presenting at the 2017 International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG) World Congress on malnutrition. This was an international conference and the world's largest-ever gathering of aging experts. We had international attendance at our session, and this highlighted session was sponsored by the American Society on Aging, a coalition member
- Presenting at the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) conference, for the HHS Older Individual Collaborative, and at the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP) conference
- Presenting at the New England Nutrition Conference, at the NY State Aging Services Conference, as well as in Albuquerque, Flagstaff, Michigan, Massachusetts and more
- Exhibiting at the American Society on Aging conference, the National Hispanic Medical Association's conference and at the Atlantic Health System malnutrition conference

Writing/Op-Eds

Coalition leaders published these op-eds and articles in 2017:

- The Hill
 - [“Trump's cuts to nutrition programs will put older adults at risk”](#)

- [“Seniors suffer the most after natural disasters”](#)
- HuffPost
 - [“Malnutrition and Minority Older Adults: A Health Equity Issue”](#)
 - [“Men: Eat Well for a Reason!”](#)
 - [“The Vital Role of Healthcare Quality Experts”](#)
- Next Avenue
 - [“For Older Americans Month, Let’s Rethink Policies on Aging”](#)
 - [“Large Number of Aging Veterans Are Malnourished”](#)
- Boston University’s Public Health Post
 - [“Malnutrition in Older Adults”](#)

Other Activities

- Defeat Malnutrition Today has been very active on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) this year. Our Twitter account is particularly popular—we have gained over 100 followers in 2017, and our tweets have been seen, liked, retweeted and clicked on a total of almost 40,000 times!
- We launched a website redesign in July.
- We have published monthly “Malnutrition Connection” newsletters for our members starting in March 2017, and we send our members monthly reports on our activities.
- We had three coalition-wide calls to discuss the Blueprint and advocacy strategies for the year.
- The [Community Malnutrition Resource Hub](#) was launched in March. This hub, created by NCOA, the Maryland Department of Aging, the coalition, Meals on Wheels America and other partners, is designed to help community-based organizations, public health leaders, health care professionals, and other organizations interested in reducing malnutrition among older adults. It includes practical resources, tools, and ideas to help professionals, organizations and individuals develop and implement a malnutrition plan.