

Press Release



For immediate release

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A Third of all UK Patients Suffer from Malnutrition: The BDA Heads off to the TUC to Expose this “National Disgrace”

The British Dietetic Association (BDA) will be at the TUC Conference next week in Manchester to present a hard-hitting motion to conference delegates. The motion will be presented by the BDA Trade Union Board Chairman, Suzanne Wong, and it will be seconded by the President of the GMB Union, Mary Turner MBE.

The motion (as detailed in the Notes to the Editor below), outlines in very strong terms the unsatisfactory levels of malnutrition in our hospitals and other care settings and the additional £13 billion pounds this costs the UK economy.

The motion also calls for Government guidance to hospitals on malnutrition to be considerably overhauled in favour of strong statutory regulation which would compel hospitals and other care settings to take a more comprehensive approach to avoiding patient malnutrition.

Speaking ahead of the TUC Conference, the BDA Trade Union Board Chairman, Suzanne Wong, said:

“Can you believe that in 2010 in the UK a third of all adults admitted to hospitals and other care settings are suffering from malnutrition? It’s an absolute national disgrace and a complete failure to some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

“Primarily this is about ensuring a basic level of care and quality of life to all patients, but it is also about reducing longer hospital stays and numerous re-admissions to hospitals, which, all together, racks up an annual additional bill of £13 billion.

“What is painfully clear is that good practice and general guidance from numerous bodies has simply not worked. In fact, one could argue that this has allowed the problem to become worse as there are currently no firm regulations to ensure this is addressed.

“The time has now come to say enough is absolutely enough! I will be taking this issue to the TUC and asking them to join with the British Dietetic Association in calling on the new coalition Government to put in place firm statutory regulation that makes all our hospitals and care settings directly responsible to ensure all is done

that is possible, to address those suffering malnutrition. In addition, the BDA wants far more action to be taken to identify those with malnutrition in the first instance, which ultimately reduces the amount of time someone stays in a hospital or care setting.”

The BDA will be present at the TUC Conference for the duration of the event at Manchester’s Central Convention Complex and will be exhibiting in the main arena on stand number 25.

Members of the media are warmly invited to come to the BDA stand to talk about the motion.

ENDS

For more information / interview requests, please contact the BDA Press Office on 0870 850 2517

Notes to the Editor:

The full motion reads:

This Conference is appalled to note that in 2010 a third of all adults admitted to hospitals and other care settings continue to suffer from malnutrition. This, together with dehydration can lead to reduced quality of life, increased dependency, longer hospital stays and can ultimately cause death. In addition, malnutrition costs the UK economy an estimated £13 billion each year.

Over the last 20 years numerous reports have been produced by many different bodies highlighting the ongoing prevalence and detrimental effects of malnutrition across a range of settings and age groups – but especially in older adults. Despite this, levels of malnutrition and dehydration remain unacceptably high.

This culminated in key bodies forming the Council of Europe Alliance producing the “10 Key Characteristics of Good Nutritional Care”. In addition the Care Quality Commission will be assessing provision of nutrition and hydration in health and social care settings from October 2010.

Most reports have issued guidance addressing the significant problem of malnutrition and dehydration however the statistics show guidance alone appears not to be effective.

It is time to convert guidance into requirement. We therefore call upon Congress to lobby Government to introduce a statutory regulatory framework of comprehensive nutritional standards for all health care settings in order to reduce this great burden on health and quality of life.

We also recognise that issues around health care affect everyone and call on all Unions to raise awareness to their members of the importance of identifying and tackling malnutrition.

The British Dietetic Association

- The British Dietetic Association, founded in 1936, is the professional association for registered dietitians in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is the nation's largest organisation of food and nutrition professionals with over 6,000 members.
- Registered dietitians are the only qualified health professionals that assess, diagnose and treat diet and nutrition problems at an individual and wider public health level. Uniquely, dietitians use the most up to date public health and scientific research on food, health and disease, which they translate into practical guidance to enable people to make appropriate lifestyle and food choices.
- Dietitians are the only nutrition professionals to be statutorily regulated, and governed by an ethical code, to ensure that they always work to the highest standard. Dietitians work in the NHS, private practice, industry, education, research, sport, media, public relations, publishing, Non Government Organisations and government. Their advice influences food and health policy across the spectrum from government, local communities and individuals.