

The BDA Scotland Board welcomes the invitation to respond to the NHS Healthcare Improvement Scotland, consultation on draft general standards for neurological care and support. We commend the standards and the rationale behind them. We appreciate the extent the standards should improve care and support, thereby benefiting people living with neurological conditions, staff and the organisations involved. The BDA Scotland Board therefore very much supports the draft general standards. Furthermore, we would like to take the opportunity to raise awareness of dietitians' roles in this area and offer some issues for consideration pertinent to implementation of the standards.

The diagnosis of a neurological disorder may have significant implications for an individual's nutritional status. Many barriers to achieving and maintaining good nutritional status may be encountered. Dietitians have a crucial role in helping to optimise nutritional care for each patient according to their individual needs. They focus on prevention, early detection, early intervention, supporting independence and wellbeing. Dietitians are the only appropriately trained and registered healthcare professionals who can assess a patient's energy, protein, micro and macro nutrient requirements and who can develop effective treatment plans in artificial feeding, modified consistency diets/fluids and food first approaches.

In the speciality of neurological care, dietitians work within the fields of neurology, stroke, neurosurgery and neuro-rehabilitation, where they:

- Are essential members of multi-disciplinary teams helping to reduce hospital stays by up to 5.5 days by optimising patients' nutrition. <sup>1</sup>
- Train multidisciplinary team members on nutritional screening, first line management of malnutrition as well as the whole nutrition pathway for patients to provide timely and appropriate interventions.
- Work with patients whose nutritional and fluid intake has been identified as inadequate.
- Provide on-going support to patients with swallowing difficulties by managing tube feeds and advising on texture modified diets which can help avoid hospital admissions.
- Improve the outcomes of patients undergoing rehabilitation by ensuring they receive adequate nutrition to achieve their physical goals. Good nutrition can promote wound healing, optimise the immune system, improve mood and help achieve a healthy weight to help with mobility.
- Contribute to stroke prevention by delivering teaching and workshops to help people make life-style changes which can reduce their risk of a stroke.
- Provide expert advice into team discussions around the ethics of artificial nutrition, feeding at risk, end of life and palliative care treatment and decisions.

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<sup>1</sup> The specialist contribution of speech and language therapists along the care path-way for stroke survivors. RCSLT, 2007

**Notes:**

The British Dietetic Association (BDA), founded in 1936, is the professional association and trade union for dietitians in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is the nation's largest organisation of food and nutrition professionals with over 9,000 members.

Dietitians are highly qualified health professionals that assess, diagnose and treat diet and nutrition problems at an individual and wider public health level. They are statutorily regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), alongside other Allied Health Professions.

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. They work in the NHS, private practice, industry, education, research, sport, media and government. Their advice influences food and health policy across the spectrum from government and global industry to local communities and individuals.

The BDA Scotland Board represent nationally, as well as in Scotland, the interests of the profession and members to key stakeholders, such as government departments and other professions and public bodies. Aiming to be the expert voice of nutrition and dietetics in Scotland, it also represents BDA Scotland members at the BDA UK level.

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