

The Importance of Nutritional Support in Cancer †

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Abstract: Nutritional support for cancer patients includes several aspects. The most central is the identification of patients who are at risk of becoming or who are already malnourished; dietary advice to patient and family; information and education of all staff involved in the care of the patient, at the hospital and home; drugs, nutraceuticals, and other interventions to relieve symptoms preventing adequate food intake, as well as a variety of intensive interventions like enteral and parenteral supplies of nutrition. It is very important to identify in the cancer patients the area of overlap between the two therapeutic approaches consisting of nutritional support and chemotherapy interventions in the light of the variables that determine their identification (guidelines, evidence, ethics, and law). The available evidence suggests that nutrition therapy is key for cancer patients to maintain nutritional status and improve their quality of life, at least in specific clinical settings. Most of the studies addressing the role of nutrition in cancer patients included a limited number of patients in the very late stage of their disease. Effective nutrition therapy is based on a thorough assessment of weight loss history, eating behavior, changes in appetite, and the presence of nutrition impact symptoms. Optimal dietary interventions may decrease morbidity and mortality in patients with cancer before, during, and after definitive therapy.

Keywords: cancer; cachexia; diet therapy; nutraceuticals;

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.