



EDITORIAL

MALNUTRITION AMONG HOSPITALIZED PATIENTS AND IN THE HOME

Patients with functional gastrointestinal tract who are not able to meet their nutritional requirements through oral feeding may benefit from the use of enteral nutrition via feeding tubes which could be nasogastric, percutaneous, endoscopic gastrostomy and jejunostomy. They improve and promote the nutritional status and adequate nutritional intake both in quality and quantity. Oral feeding difficulties are relatively common in our hospitalized patients.

As our life expectancy improves in developing countries, many more people will require enteral feeding because of age-related disorders. These patients include those with dementia, stroke, unconscious state for various reasons and dysphagia for various reasons as well. Enteric feeding is needed for wound healing, muscle strength, immunity and maintenance of various physiological functions.

The enteric feeds should be adequate in caloric intake, vitamins, proteins and minerals. These need the supervision of well-trained nutritionists working with people who prepare meals. Absolute hygiene is required in food preparation and feeding. Feeding this group of patients requires patience, understanding and empathy. Therefore, people trained in the care of elderly patients (geriatrics) are needed urgently in developing countries. Community awareness is urgently needed to promote understanding of nutrition in patients who are not able to feed on their own. Family support is gradually becoming diminished as the caregivers, who used to be grandchildren, are now required to go to school by law in Kenya, therefore reducing the caregiver pool, making sick patients who need support vulnerable to suffering.

In Nairobi City, I believe there is a college that is currently training caregivers for the elderly. These graduates can be hired to give valuable service to those who are not able to feed orally on their own. Apart from feeding, psychological support, personal hygiene and general care would be offered by this group of people.

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*African Journal Of
Health Sciences*