

Malnutrition Matters, Joint BAPEN and Nutrition Society Meeting, 13–14 October 2009, Cardiff

Prevalence of malnutrition in Sheltered Housing Schemes in Wiltshire and Somerset

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The Department of Health Nutrition Action Plan⁽¹⁾ recommends nutrition screening in all health and social care settings, one of which is sheltered housing. Sheltered housing schemes in the UK account for a greater number of individuals (~0.67 million) than those residing in care homes (~0.5 million)⁽²⁾ and yet there have only been a few studies assessing malnutrition^(2,3). The aim of this large survey was to establish the prevalence of malnutrition in individuals living in sheltered housing in Wiltshire, Bath and North East Somerset and to compare it to previously published figures in other geographic localities in the UK.

One thousand three hundred and fifty three individuals (mean age 78 years (SD 10.4); 77% female) in 140 sheltered housing schemes were screened using the 'Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool' ('MUST')⁽²⁾ during invited coffee mornings over a 6-month period in 2008. To calculate malnutrition risk (low, medium and high) using 'MUST', weight (kg), height (m), BMI (kg/m²), recent percent unintentional weight loss and information on acute disease effect were collected and analysed. All individuals could be screened using 'MUST'.

Twelve percent of individuals were 'at risk' of malnutrition (7% medium and 5% high) with those greater than 80 years of age ($n = 740$) having a significantly ($\text{Chi}^2 P < 0.03$) greater prevalence of malnutrition (14%) than those less than 80 years of age (9%). All individuals at risk of malnutrition were identified with 'MUST' steps 1 and 2 (BMI and weight loss). Seven percent ($n = 101$) had a BMI < 20 kg/m² (including 4% ($n = 52$) BMI < 18.5; step 1) and 5% ($n = 70$) had > 5% unintentional weight loss (including 1% ($n = 17$) with > 10%; step 2). No individuals were identified with an acute disease effect (step 3). The overall prevalence of malnutrition (12%) was similar to previously published smaller surveys in the UK (Wales (12%)⁽³⁾ and Harrogate (14%)⁽²⁾).

This is the largest survey of malnutrition in sheltered housing residents to date. In accordance with smaller studies in sheltered housing, this survey highlights that more than 1 in 10 tenants are at risk of malnutrition (which equates to > 67 000 individuals in the UK). Studies are now required to investigate the effect of implementing procedures to facilitate the identification and management of malnutrition in sheltered housing.

1. Department of Health (2007) *Improving Nutritional Care: A Joint Action Plan from the Department of Health and Nutrition Summit Stakeholders*. Leeds: Department of Health.
2. Elia M & Russell CA (2009) *Screening for Malnutrition in Sheltered Housing 2009*. A Report by BAPEN on Behalf of The Group on Nutrition and Sheltered Housing (GNASH).
3. Harris *et al.* (2008) *J Hum Nutr Diet*, **21**, 3–9. [Google: initials of Harris.]