

Feeding in Cancer Patients: The Collaborative Role of Nurses and Dietitians

Jyoti Kumari¹, Rajendra Kumar Sahu²

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Abstract

Cancer and its treatments often pose significant nutritional challenges for patients, leading to malnutrition, which impacts physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. Loss of appetite, taste changes, difficulty swallowing, and malabsorption are common issues faced by cancer patients, contributing to malnutrition. As key members of the healthcare team, nurses and dietitians are instrumental in addressing these challenges and ensuring that patients receive proper nutrition. They collaborate to develop personalized nutrition plans tailored to individual needs, treatment protocols, and side effect management. Various feeding techniques are employed to meet the nutritional requirements of cancer patients. The interdisciplinary collaboration between nurses and dietitians is crucial for providing comprehensive care to cancer patients. Nutritional assessments, modified diets, appetite stimulation, pain management, and oral care are some of the strategies employed by these healthcare professionals to support oral feeding. A cancer survivor continues their journey post-treatment, nutrition remains a significant aspect of survivorship care. Nurse and dietitian led survivorship programs focus on promoting healthy lifestyles, and physical activity, and addressing long term dietary challenges faced by cancer survivors. In conclusion, the collaboration between nurses and dietitians plays a pivotal role in addressing the nutritional challenges faced by cancer patients. By providing personalized nutrition plans and interventions, these healthcare professionals enhance patient care, treatment tolerability, and overall well-being. Through their combined efforts, cancer patients are better equipped to face the challenges of treatment, improve their nutritional status, and ultimately lead better lives during and after their battle with cancer.

Keywords: Cancer; Nutritional challenges; Difficulty swallowing; Personalized nutrition plans; Feeding techniques; Interdisciplinary collaboration; Nutritional assessments; Modified diets.

Author Affiliation: ¹Dietitian, ²Nurse Educator, Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital & Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya Cancer Centre, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh 221005, India.

Corresponding Author: Rajendra Kumar Sahu, Nurse Educator, Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital & Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya Cancer Centre Varanasi Uttar Pradesh 221005, India.

E-mail: gloriousdhamtari@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Cancer is a leading cause of morbidity and mortality in the world, accounting for nearly 10 million deaths in year of 2020, or nearly one in six deaths.¹ In the year 2020, the estimated count of cancer patients in India was 1,392,179, with the most prevalent types occurring in the breast, lung, mouth, cervix uteri, and tongue.² Cancer and its treatments often lead to various nutritional challenges, including loss of appetite, taste changes, difficulty

swallowing, and malabsorption.³ Malnutrition, commonly observed in cancer patients, not only impacts their physical health but also affects their emotional and psychological well being. As key members of the healthcare team, nurses and dietitians play a critical role in assessing, planning, and implementing effective nutrition interventions to enhance patients' nutritional status and overall outcomes.

Feeding refers to the process of providing food to living organisms to sustain life, growth, and energy. It is a fundamental biological activity necessary for survival. Feeding ensures that organisms receive essential nutrients, such as proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals, required for various physiological functions and metabolic processes.

Feeding involves the consumption of food through various methods, such as chewing, swallowing, and digestion.⁴ It is a complex process that starts with the selection and ingestion of food, followed by its breakdown into smaller particles during digestion, absorption of nutrients into the bloodstream, and elimination of waste products.

Proper feeding is crucial for maintaining good health and well being.⁵ It provides the necessary energy for bodily functions, supports growth and development, and helps the body repair and regenerate tissues. Additionally, adequate nutrition plays a significant role in preventing malnutrition and various diet related diseases.

In the context of healthcare, feeding takes on a more specialized role when dealing with patients who may have specific nutritional needs due to medical conditions, surgeries, or treatments. For example, in the case of cancer patients, feeding becomes a critical aspect of care, and healthcare professionals, such as nurses and dietitians, play an essential role in providing appropriate nutritional support to improve treatment outcomes and overall quality of life. Oral Feeding, enteral feeding and Parental feeding are common types of feeding.

ORAL FEEDING

Nutritional products that provide an effective and non-invasive way for people to meet their nutritional needs. Oral feeding in cancer patients refers to the process of providing nutrition through the oral route, primarily by consuming food and fluids by mouth.⁶ Cancer and its treatments can significantly impact a patient's ability to eat and maintain proper nutrition, making oral feeding a crucial aspect of cancer care. Many cancer patients

experience various challenges related to eating, such as reduced appetite, taste changes, difficulty swallowing, mouth sores, and nausea, which can lead to malnutrition and negatively impact treatment outcomes and overall well being.

Types of diet used in oral feeding:

1. Normal Diet
2. Soft Diet
3. Liquid Diet
4. Clear Liquid Diet

Normal Diet

Normal diet is most frequently used in all health care settings, it is used for ambulatory who does not require a special diet. A normal diet, also known as a regular diet, is a balanced and well rounded eating plan that meets the nutritional needs of healthy individuals without any specific dietary restrictions or medical conditions. It is a general diet that provides essential nutrients required for overall health, growth, and maintenance of the body. The components of a normal diet typically include a variety of foods from different food groups, ensuring a mix of macronutrients (carbohydrates, proteins, and fats) and micronutrients (vitamins and minerals).

Characteristics of a Normal Diet for Patients:

1. **Balanced Nutrition:** A normal diet is characterized by a balanced distribution of macronutrients. It includes an appropriate amount of carbohydrates to provide energy, proteins to support tissue repair and growth, and fats for essential fatty acids and fat-soluble vitamins.
2. **Varied Food Choices:** A regular diet incorporates a wide range of food choices from various food groups. It includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins (such as poultry, fish, beans, and legumes), dairy products, and healthy fats (like olive oil, avocados, and nuts).
3. **Adequate Hydration:** Staying well hydrated is crucial for overall health. A normal diet encourages the consumption of sufficient water and other hydrating beverages, such as herbal teas and unsweetened fruit juices, to maintain proper hydration levels.
4. **Portion Control:** Monitoring portion sizes is essential in a normal diet to prevent

overeating and maintain a healthy weight. Moderation is key to avoid excessive calorie intake and potential weight gain.

5. **Limited Added Sugars and Processed Foods:** A normal diet limits the intake of added sugars and highly processed foods, which are often high in empty calories and low in nutritional value. Instead, it emphasizes whole, nutrient dense foods.
6. **Regular Meal Patterns:** Following a regular meal schedule is encouraged in a normal diet. Consistent meal times help regulate metabolism and maintain stable blood sugar levels throughout the day.
7. **Mindful Eating:** Patients following a normal diet are encouraged to practice mindful eating, paying attention to hunger cues and eating with awareness. This can help prevent overeating and promote a healthy relationship with food.

SOFT DIET

It may be used in acute infections, following surgery, and for patients who are unable to chew the normal food substances. The soft diet is made up of simple, easily digested food and contains no harsh fibre low in fat and no rich highly seasoned food. A soft diet for cancer patients is a specialized eating plan designed to provide easily digestible and gentle foods for individuals undergoing cancer treatment. Cancer and its treatments, such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy, can cause various side effects that may impact a patient's ability to eat and tolerate regular foods. A soft diet aims to alleviate discomfort, minimize irritation, and maintain adequate nutrition during this challenging time.

Characteristics of a Soft Diet for Cancer Patients:

1. **Easily Chewable:** Foods on a soft diet are soft and easy to chew. This is particularly important for patients experiencing mouth sores or dental issues as a result of cancer treatments.
2. **Smooth Texture:** The texture of foods is smooth and devoid of coarse or hard elements, which can be difficult to swallow or may exacerbate mouth irritation.
3. **Well-cooked and Moist:** Foods are typically well-cooked and moist to enhance their palatability and ease of swallowing.
4. **Low in Spices and Seasonings:** To avoid potential irritation, the use of spicy or heavily seasoned ingredients is limited.
5. **Nutrient Dense:** Despite the soft texture, the diet is designed to be nutrient dense, providing essential vitamins, minerals, and proteins for maintaining the patient's strength and immunity.

Foods Typically Included in a Soft Diet for Cancer Patients:

1. **Cooked Cereals:** Soft cooked oatmeal, cream of wheat, or rice porridge are gentle options that provide carbohydrates and fibres.
2. **Mashed or Pureed Vegetables:** Cooked vegetables such as mashed potatoes, pureed carrots, and squash offer essential vitamins and minerals in a smooth form.
3. **Soft Fruits:** Ripe bananas, applesauce, and well cooked fruits like pears or peaches can be included for added nutrients and fiber.
4. **Soups and Broths:** Clear soups and broths can be part of the diet to provide hydration and some nutrients. They should be strained to remove any solid pieces.
5. **Soft Proteins:** Tender, cooked meats like ground beef, minced chicken, or fish are included to provide protein.
6. **Dairy Products:** Soft dairy options like yogurt, pudding, and cottage cheese offer protein and calcium.
7. **Soft Breads:** Soft bread products, such as white bread or bread rolls without seeds, can be included if tolerated.
8. **Nutritional Supplements:** If needed, nutritional supplements can be recommended to ensure adequate nutrient intake.

Considerations for a Soft Diet:

9. **Individual Tolerance:** The tolerance for certain foods may vary among patients, so it is essential to tailor the soft diet to meet each patient's specific needs and preferences.
10. **Hydration:** Ensuring sufficient hydration is critical, especially if swallowing difficulties are present. Encouraging frequent sips of water or other hydrating beverages is vital.
11. **Regular Nutritional Assessment:** Regular assessments by a registered dietitian or healthcare professional are necessary to monitor the patient's nutritional status and adjust as needed.
12. **Gradual Reintroduction of Solid Foods:** As the patient's condition improves, a gradual transition back to regular foods can be

considered under the guidance of healthcare providers.

LIQUID DIET

A liquid diet for cancer patients is a specialized eating plan that consists of easily digestible, nutrient rich liquids. It is designed to provide essential nutrients and hydration to cancer patients who may experience difficulty chewing, swallowing, or digesting solid foods due to the side effects of cancer treatments or the progression of the disease. A liquid diet can help alleviate discomfort, provide nourishment, and maintain hydration during the challenging phases of cancer treatment. It is used in operations, gastritis, acute infections, and diarrhea. This diet is also suggested when milk is permitted and for patients not requiring special diets but too ill to eat a soft or normal diet.

Characteristics of a Liquid Diet for Cancer Patients:

1. **Easily Consumed:** The primary characteristic of a liquid diet is that it can be easily consumed without the need for extensive chewing or swallowing, making it suitable for patients with oral or esophageal complications.
2. **Nutrient Dense:** A liquid diet for cancer patients is carefully formulated to be nutrient dense, providing essential proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals to support the patient's nutritional needs.
3. **Hydration:** The diet emphasizes fluids to ensure adequate hydration, especially since cancer treatments can lead to increased fluid loss and dehydration.
4. **Smooth Texture:** Liquid foods on this diet have a smooth texture to avoid irritation or discomfort during ingestion.
5. **Variety:** Despite the limitations on texture, a liquid diet can offer a variety of flavors and nutrient sources through soups, broths, smoothies, and other blended options.

Foods Typically Included in a Liquid Diet for Cancer Patients:

1. **Clear Liquids:** Clear fluids, such as water, clear broths, and herbal teas, are included to maintain hydration.
2. **Full Liquid Supplements:** Commercially available full liquid nutritional supplements can provide a comprehensive source of essential nutrients.
3. **Pureed Soups:** Soups made from pureed

vegetables or soft cooked meats can provide additional nutrients and flavors.

4. **Smoothies and Shakes:** Blended beverages made with fruits, vegetables, yogurt, milk, or protein powders offer a nutritious and palatable option.
5. **Nutritional Puddings:** Commercially available nutritional puddings can provide a soft and nutrient dense treat.
6. **Vegetable or Fruit Juices:** 100% vegetable or fruit juices can be included, but they should be consumed in moderation due to their natural sugars.
7. **Protein Shakes:** Protein shakes made with protein powders or liquid nutritional supplements can contribute to the patient's protein intake.

Considerations for a Liquid Diet:

1. **Individualized Approach:** Each patient's tolerance and nutritional requirements may vary, so a liquid diet plan should be tailored to meet their specific needs and preferences.
2. **Medical Supervision:** A liquid diet for cancer patients should be implemented under the guidance of healthcare professionals, including registered dietitians and oncologists, to ensure the patient's nutritional needs are met adequately.
3. **Gradual Transition:** In some cases, a liquid diet may be temporary, serving as a transitional phase until the patient can tolerate soft or solid foods again.
4. **Supplemental Nutrition:** Nutritional supplements may be recommended to provide additional vitamins and minerals as needed.

CLEAR LIQUID DIET

Whenever an acute illness or surgery, produces a marked intolerance for food as may be evident by nausea, anorexia, distention, and diarrhea. It is advisable to restrict the intake of food. A clear liquid diet for cancer patients is a restricted eating plan that includes only liquids that are transparent and easily digestible. It is commonly prescribed before and after medical procedures or surgeries, including cancer treatments, to provide hydration and some essential nutrients while giving the digestive system a break. The clear liquid diet is not intended for long-term use and lacks sufficient nutrients for extended periods; thus, it is usually

recommended for short durations.

Characteristics of a Clear Liquid Diet for Cancer Patients:

1. **Transparency:** The liquids included in a clear liquid diet are transparent and leave little to no residue. They allow for clear visualization of the digestive tract during medical procedures.
2. **Easy Digestion:** Clear liquids are easily digested and do not put a strain on the gastrointestinal system.
3. **Hydration:** The primary purpose of the clear liquid diet is to maintain hydration, as it provides fluids to prevent dehydration during times when solid foods are restricted.
4. **Limited Nutrients:** The clear liquid diet lacks essential nutrients like proteins, fats, and fiber, which are vital for proper nutrition. As a result, it is not suitable for long term use.

Foods Typically Included in a Clear Liquid Diet for Cancer Patients:

1. **Water:** Plain water is the primary source of hydration on a clear liquid diet.
2. **Clear Broths:** Clear soups or broths made from chicken, beef, or vegetable stock are included.
3. **Herbal Teas:** Non-caffeinated herbal teas are permitted, providing additional hydration and some soothing properties.
4. **Clear Fruit Juices:** 100% fruit juices without pulp, such as apple or grape juice, can be included in moderation for added calories and nutrients.
5. **Clear Carbonated Beverages:** Non-caffeinated and non-colored carbonated beverages like ginger ale can be consumed.
6. **Jell-O and Popsicles:** Gelatin based desserts and popsicles without any fruit or solid pieces can provide some variety.

Considerations for a Clear Liquid Diet:

1. **Short-Term Use:** The clear liquid diet is not intended for extended periods due to its limited nutritional content. It is typically used for 24 to 48 hours before or after medical procedures.
2. **Consultation with Healthcare Team:** Cancer patients should follow a clear liquid diet only under the guidance of their healthcare team, including oncologists and registered dietitians.

3. **Nutritional Supplementation:** If the patient needs to be on a clear liquid diet for an extended period, supplemental nutrition through intravenous or enteral feeding may be required to ensure adequate nutrient intake.
4. **Gradual Transition:** After following a clear liquid diet, patients will need to transition back to a regular diet gradually, reintroducing soft and solid foods as tolerated.

Importance of Oral Feeding in Cancer Patients:

1. **Maintaining Nutritional Status:** Adequate nutrition is vital for cancer patients to support their immune system, promote healing, and prevent muscle wasting. Oral feeding helps patients obtain essential nutrients necessary for their bodies to cope with the physical and metabolic demands of cancer and its treatments.
2. **Enhancing Quality of Life:** Enjoying meals and maintaining the ability to eat orally can significantly improve a patient's quality of life during cancer treatment. It provides comfort, a sense of normalcy, and emotional well being by allowing patients to continue engaging in the social and cultural aspects of eating.
3. **Supporting Treatment Tolerance:** Well nourished patients may better tolerate cancer treatments, such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy. Sufficient nutrition can reduce treatment related side effects, enhance recovery, and enable patients to complete their prescribed therapies.

Strategies to Support Oral Feeding in Cancer Patients:

1. **Nutritional Assessment:** Healthcare professionals, including nurses and dietitians, conduct thorough nutritional assessments to identify any malnutrition or potential nutritional risks in cancer patients. This assessment helps in developing personalized nutrition plans tailored to the patient's specific needs and treatment regimen.
2. **Modified Diets:** Dietitians can design modified diets that address taste changes, swallowing difficulties, and other side effects of cancer treatments. Soft or pureed diets, cold or frozen foods, and avoiding certain tastes or textures may be recommended to improve oral intake.
3. **Nutritional Counselling:** Providing patients

and their families with nutritional counseling can educate them about dietary adjustments, meal planning, and strategies to manage treatment related side effects. This counseling empowers patients to make informed decisions about their dietary choices.

4. **Appetite Stimulation:** Nurses and healthcare providers can suggest appetite stimulating measures to encourage patients to eat more. This may include serving small, frequent meals, incorporating favorite foods into the diet, or using aromatherapy to enhance appetite.
5. **Pain and Symptom Management:** Pain and discomfort can interfere with eating. Nurses can work with the healthcare team to manage symptoms effectively, enabling patients to eat more comfortably.
6. **Oral Care:** Cancer treatments may cause oral mucositis and other mouth related issues, making eating difficult. Proper oral care, such as regular mouth rinsing and maintaining good dental hygiene, can improve patients' ability to consume food orally.
7. **Monitoring and Follow-up:** Regular monitoring of a patient's nutritional status is essential to track progress and adjust the nutrition plan as needed. Follow-up appointments with dietitians and healthcare providers allow for ongoing support and adjustments based on the patient's changing needs.

ENTERAL NUTRITION

Enteral nutrition, also known as tube feeding, is a method of providing nutrition to cancer patients who are unable to consume adequate food orally or have difficulty swallowing due to the side effects of cancer treatments or the progression of the disease. Enteral nutrition involves delivering liquid nutrients directly into the gastrointestinal tract through a tube, bypassing the mouth and oesophagus. This method ensures that patients receive the necessary nutrients, including proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals, to support their nutritional needs and maintain their overall health during cancer treatment.

Enteral nutrition can be provided by tube feeding. By definition, enteral feeding means within or by way of the gastrointestinal tract. Enteral nutrition is given to an individual who has a functioning gut and is unable or unwilling to achieve adequate oral intake. If the gut is functioning it should be used,

enteral feeding retains epithelial structure and functioning of the GI tract. It also increases mucosal immunity.

Indications for Enteral Nutrition in Cancer Patients:

1. **Dysphagia:** Cancer patients who experience difficulty swallowing, often due to throat or oesophageal cancer or the side effects of radiation therapy, may require enteral nutrition to ensure proper nutrition.
2. **Oral Mucositis:** Inflammation and ulceration of the mouth and throat caused by cancer treatments can make eating painful and difficult, making enteral nutrition a viable option.
3. **Malnutrition:** Cancer and its treatments can lead to malnutrition, and enteral feeding can help address nutritional deficiencies and support the patient's immune system and overall well being.
4. **Bowel Obstruction:** In cases where cancer has caused bowel obstruction or mechanical complications, enteral nutrition may be used as a safe alternative to oral feeding.

Types of Enteral Feeding:

1. **Nasogastric (NG) Tube:** The tube is inserted through the nose and advanced into the stomach, allowing for the administration of liquid nutrition.
2. **Naso-jejunal (NJ) Tube:** Similar to the NG tube, the tube is advanced into the jejunum (the second part of the small intestine) for patients who cannot tolerate feeding into the stomach.
3. **Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy (PEG) Tube:** A more long-term option, a PEG tube is inserted directly through the abdominal wall into the stomach, allowing for feeding without the need for repeated tube insertions.
4. **Jejunostomy (J-Tube):** Similar to the PEG tube, the tube is inserted directly into the jejunum, bypassing the stomach.

Considerations for Enteral Nutrition:

1. **Nutritional Assessment:** A thorough nutritional assessment is crucial to determine the patient's specific needs and develop an appropriate enteral nutrition plan.
2. **Medical Supervision:** Enteral feeding requires close monitoring and adjustments by a healthcare team, including registered

dietitians and medical professionals.

3. **Tube Care and Hygiene:** Proper care and hygiene of the tube insertion site are essential to prevent infections and complications.
4. **Gradual Transition:** When a patient's oral intake improves, transitioning back to oral feeding or a combination of oral and tube feeding may be considered.

Feeding techniques refer to the different methods used to provide nutrition and sustenance to individuals who may have specific needs or challenges related to eating. These techniques are tailored to accommodate various health conditions, age groups, and medical requirements. Here are some common types of feeding techniques:

1. **Oral Feeding:** The most common and natural feeding technique where food and liquids are consumed through the mouth and swallowed.

2. Enteral Feeding:

2.1. Nasogastric (NG) Feeding: Liquid nutrition is delivered directly into the stomach through a tube inserted through the nose and down the oesophagus.

2.2. Naso-jejunal (NJ) Feeding: Liquid nutrition is delivered into the jejunum, the second part of the small intestine, through a tube inserted through the nose.

3. Gastrostomy Feeding (PEG or G-tube):

1. **Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy (PEG):** A tube is inserted directly through the abdominal wall into the stomach, allowing for long-term feeding directly into the stomach.
2. **G-tube (Gastrostomy Tube):** A generic term for various types of tubes placed directly into the stomach through the abdominal wall.
3. **Jejunostomy Feeding (J-tube):** A tube is inserted directly into the jejunum, bypassing the stomach, for patients who cannot tolerate gastric feeding.
4. **Total Parenteral Nutrition (TPN):** Also known as intravenous nutrition, TPN involves delivering a balanced mixture of nutrients directly into the bloodstream through a central venous catheter, bypassing the digestive system entirely.
5. **Bolus Feeding:** A method of enteral feeding where a larger volume of liquid nutrition is delivered through a feeding tube in a short period, similar to a meal.
6. **Continuous Feeding:** A method of enteral feeding where liquid nutrition is delivered

continuously over an extended period, usually through a pump, providing a steady flow of nutrients.

7. **Gravity Drip Feeding:** A method of enteral feeding where liquid nutrition is delivered via a feeding tube using gravity, without the need for a pump.
8. **Tube-to-Oral Transition:** A feeding technique that involves transitioning a patient from enteral feeding (tube feeding) to oral feeding as their ability to eat orally improves.

TOTAL PARENTERAL NUTRITION

Peripheral nutrition is a means of nutrition support in which the parental solution is administered directly into the peripheral vein.⁷ It is indicated for anticipated short term use because it usually does not meet all the nutritional needs of patients.

Total parenteral nutrition (TPN) is a method of providing comprehensive nutrition to cancer patients who are unable to consume food orally or through enteral feeding due to severe gastrointestinal issues, malabsorption problems, or other medical conditions. TPN involves delivering a balanced mixture of nutrients directly into the bloodstream through a central venous catheter, bypassing the digestive system entirely. This allows cancer patients to receive all the necessary macronutrients, micronutrients, vitamins, and minerals required to support their nutritional needs and maintain their overall health during cancer treatment.

In parenteral nutrition, a sterile dense solution is infused intravenously by peripheral or central venous access, entirely bypassing the digestive tract. Parental nutrition is for those patients who are not capable of digesting and absorbing nutrients and who are severely malnourished and for catabolic patients.

Parenteral nutrition is the life saving modality in critically ill patients. Undernourished patients scheduled for high risk surgeries can benefit from parental nutrition with lower complication rates and shorter hospital stays. Reducing the intake of total calories to moderate levels may improve outcomes in mechanically ventilated patients in ICU. Providing high protein hypo calories in parental nutrition can minimize the risk of overfeeding in obese critically ill patients. And facilitate good glucose control in patients with diabetes.

Indications for Total Parenteral Nutrition in Cancer Patients:

1. **Severe Malnutrition:** Cancer patients who have experienced significant weight loss and malnutrition may require TPN to rapidly restore their nutrient levels and improve their immune function.
2. **Gastrointestinal Issues:** Patients with advanced cancer or undergoing intense treatments may experience gastrointestinal complications that prevent them from absorbing nutrients from regular food or enteral feeding.
3. **Bowel Obstruction:** In cases where cancer has caused complete bowel obstruction or other mechanical complications, TPN may be the only option for providing nutrition.
4. **Oral Mucositis:** Painful mouth sores and inflammation caused by cancer treatments can make eating or enteral feeding impossible, necessitating TPN.
5. **Impaired Digestive Function:** Cancer patients with conditions such as short bowel syndrome may require TPN as their primary source of nutrition.

Components of Total Parenteral Nutrition:

TPN solutions are typically customized based on the individual patient's specific nutritional needs, and they can contain a combination of the following components:

1. **Amino Acids:** To provide protein for tissue repair and support immune function.
2. **Glucose:** As a source of carbohydrates and energy.
3. **Lipids (Fats):** To supply essential fatty acids and additional calories.
4. **Electrolytes:** Such as sodium, potassium, calcium, and magnesium, to maintain proper fluid balance and nerve function.
5. **Vitamins:** To prevent nutritional deficiencies and support various physiological functions.
6. **Trace Elements:** Such as zinc, copper, and selenium, which are essential for enzyme function and immune support.

Considerations for Total Parenteral Nutrition:

1. **Medical Supervision:** TPN requires careful monitoring and adjustment by a multidisciplinary healthcare team, including registered dietitians, pharmacists, and medical professionals.

2. **Central Venous Catheter:** Placement of a central venous catheter is necessary to deliver the TPN solution into a large vein near the heart.
3. **Risk of Infections:** TPN increases the risk of bloodstream infections, so maintaining strict sterile techniques and proper catheter care is critical.
4. **Gradual Transition:** As a patient's condition improves, transitioning to enteral feeding or oral intake may be considered.

The Impact of Malnutrition in Cancer Patients:

Malnutrition is a common concern among cancer patients, resulting from the tumor's metabolic demands, side effects of treatments, and the physiological response to the disease. It leads to decreased tolerance to treatments, impaired immune function, increased risk of infections, reduced muscle mass, and diminished quality of life. Recognizing the signs of malnutrition is vital for early intervention and improved patient outcomes.

The Role of Nurses in Nutritional Care:

Nurses are at the forefront of patient care, and their involvement in nutritional support is invaluable. They monitor patients for signs of malnutrition, provide education on nutrition, assist with oral intake or enteral feedings, and assess patients' response to dietary interventions. Additionally, nurses address side effects that impact nutrition, such as nausea, vomiting, and mucositis, and collaborate with dietitians to develop personalized nutrition plans for individual patients.

The Role of Dietitians in Cancer Patient Nutrition:

Dietitians are specialized healthcare professionals with expertise in clinical nutrition. Their role in cancer care involves conducting comprehensive nutrition assessments, evaluating patients' dietary habits, and designing tailored nutrition plans that account for patients' treatment protocols and individual needs. Dietitians also educate patients and their families about appropriate food choices, portion control, and safe ways to manage nutrition-related side effects.

Addressing Special Nutritional Needs:

Different cancer types and treatments necessitate unique dietary considerations. For instance, patients with gastrointestinal cancers may require modified diets to manage symptoms, while those

undergoing radiation therapy might experience taste alterations. Dietitians and nurses collaborate to develop appropriate meal plans, supplements, and feeding routes to ensure patients receive adequate nutrition while minimizing treatment related side effects.

The Role of Nutrition in Cancer Survivorship:

Beyond the treatment phase, nutrition continues to play a vital role in cancer survivorship. Nurse and dietitian led survivorship programs focus on maintaining a healthy lifestyle, promoting physical activity, and addressing long-term dietary challenges faced by cancer survivors.

The Importance of Interdisciplinary Collaboration:

Effective communication and collaboration between nurses and dietitians are essential for providing comprehensive care to cancer patients. Regular meetings, case discussions, and sharing patient progress facilitate a coordinated approach to nutritional management and lead to better patient outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Cancer and its treatments present various nutritional challenges for patients, leading to potential malnutrition and its negative impact on physical, emotional, and psychological well being. Nurses and dietitians play pivotal roles in addressing these challenges and improving patients' nutritional status and overall outcomes. Through oral feeding, enteral feeding, and parental nutrition, healthcare professionals can tailor nutrition plans to meet individual patient's needs and ensure they receive essential nutrients. Strategies such as nutritional assessment, modified diets, appetite stimulation, and pain management are employed to support oral feeding in cancer patients. Furthermore, enteral feeding and parental nutrition are utilized when oral intake is not feasible, providing comprehensive nutrition and aiding patient recovery. Proper feeding techniques are crucial for maintaining good health and well being in both healthy individuals and those with medical conditions. The careful selection of diets, such as normal, soft, liquid, clear liquid, and diabetic diets, ensures appropriate nutrition for various physiological functions and metabolic processes. The successful implementation of nutritional care requires close collaboration between nurses, who are at the forefront of patient care, and dietitians, who possess specialized expertise in clinical

nutrition. By working together, they can assess patients' unique nutritional needs, design tailored plans, and address specific dietary challenges arising from cancer and its treatments. This interdisciplinary approach enhances patient care, leading to improved treatment tolerability, better recovery, and enhanced quality of life for cancer patients. As the journey does not end with cancer treatment, nutrition remains a critical aspect of survivorship care. Through survivorship programs, nurses and dietitians can support cancer survivors in maintaining a healthy lifestyle and addressing long-term dietary considerations, promoting their overall well being. In conclusion, the collaboration between nurses and dietitians in addressing the nutritional needs of cancer patients is instrumental in supporting their journey towards better health and improved quality of life. With their combined efforts, patients can be better equipped to face the challenges posed by cancer and its treatments, enhancing their chances of successful recovery and survivorship.

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