

New Research Shows Why Nutrition Should Be Back on the Table for Surgical Patients

- Implementing a nutrition care program for malnourished surgical patients showed a nearly 50 percent reduction in readmission rates, according to new data from Advocate Health Care and Abbott
- New guidelines call for hospital reform on improving nutrition before and after surgery for better patient outcomes

ABBOTT PARK, Ill., June 20, 2018— More than 48 million people in the U.S. undergo surgery each year,¹ and for decades the focus has been on making sure patients do not consume any food or drinks in the hours leading up to the surgery. Yet, 1 in 3 patients are malnourished or at risk of malnutrition when they're admitted to the hospital, and many are unaware of it.²⁻³ New research from Advocate Health Care and supported by Abbott shows that this lack of nutrition could have major health implications on patients' surgical outcomes.

As part of a real-world evidence study, Advocate Health Care implemented a nutrition care program at four of its Chicago area hospitals to help ensure their patients are nourished during their hospital stay and post-discharge. The latest data, published in *The Journal of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition*, looked at the role of nutrition care for at risk or malnourished medical and surgical patients. Researchers found that the more than 300 malnourished surgical patients who received nutrition care, had reduced hospital readmission rates by nearly 50 percent after 30 days of being discharged and the average length of stay by 2.7 days.⁴

"Driven by a commitment to achieve better outcomes at lower cost, our health system's embrace of a relatively modest nutrition care program could have wide-reaching implications for surgical patients across the country," said Krishnan Sriram, M.D., tele-intensivist at Advocate Health Care and principal investigator of the study. "By prioritizing nutrition, care providers can significantly enhance the recovery process and deliver better value for patients and their families."

OPTIMIZING NUTRITION IN THE OPERATING ROOM

Malnutrition occurs when the body doesn't get the nutrients it needs, but often goes undiagnosed because it can be invisible to the eye in both underweight and overweight individuals. Because surgeries take a large toll on a patient's body, addressing malnutrition can help set patients up for a more successful recovery. Previous research has found that malnourished patients undergoing surgery could experience delayed wound healing, surgical site infections, a longer length of stay and higher rates of hospital readmission.⁵⁻⁷

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"Surgeries can be complex, but when it comes to addressing nutrition for patients, it's quite simple," said Suela Sulo, Ph.D., researcher at Abbott and one of the study authors. "The research shows when we screen, feed and follow patients' nutritional status in the hospital and after they are discharged, we are helping them have the best chances of a successful recovery."

As more hospitals reevaluate their surgical protocols, medical guidelines are catching up. At a recent conference, a group of international experts from the American Society for Enhanced Recovery (ASER) and Perioperative Quality Initiative developed [new guidelines](#) for surgery-related nutrition. These guidelines call for routine pre-surgery nutrition screening to identify patients in need of nutrition optimization, and to restart nutrition supplementation immediately after surgery and continue to incorporate it as part of their post-operative care. As the lead author of the guidelines, Paul Wischmeyer, M.D., an anesthesiologist and critical care specialist at Duke University Hospital, is pioneering how we address surgical malnutrition today.⁸

"Malnutrition is a silent epidemic in our healthcare system," said Dr. Wischmeyer. "As an anesthesiologist, I have seen first-hand the impact addressing malnutrition can have on patients and their recovery. No patient should ever have elective surgery without being screened for malnutrition. Something that may take five minutes for us as doctors to do can have a long-lasting impact on patients— keeping them out of the hospital and making a big difference in their quality of life at the end of the day."

To help patients prepare for and recover from surgeries, Abbott offers nutritional products, including [Ensure® Pre-Surgery Clear Nutrition Drink](#), [Ensure® Surgery Immunonutrition Shake](#) and [Ensure® Enlive®](#).

About The Study

Nutrition-Focused Quality Improvement Program Results in Significant Readmission and Length of Stay Reductions for Malnourished Surgical Patients, published online Feb. 2 in *The Journal of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition*. The aim of this analysis was to evaluate the health benefits of a nutrition quality improvement program (QIP) in surgical patients when compared with medical patients. Data were collected from 1,269 QIP patients and 1,319 historical controls. These combined 2,588 participants were categorized into surgical (390 patients) and medical (2,198 patients) subgroups.

The study was funded by Abbott, which had no role in data collection or analysis.

About Abbott

At Abbott, we're committed to helping people live their best possible life through the power of health. For more than 125 years, we've brought new products and technologies to the world -- in nutrition, diagnostics, medical devices and branded generic pharmaceuticals -- that create more possibilities for more people at all stages of life. Today, 99,000 of us are working to help people live not just longer, but better, in the more than 150 countries we serve.

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- 8 Dr. Wischmeyer is a health adviser to Abbott

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