

Physicians' perceptions about managing enteral nutrition and the implementation of tools to assist in nutritional decision-making in a paediatric intensive care unit

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Background:

In Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU), an adequate nutritional support reduces mortality, morbidity and length of hospital stay. However, its management requires specific skills and knowledge. In practice, physicians are responsible for prescribing and monitoring nutrition, although they are not experts in the field. However, studies have shown that the introduction of tools improves the nutrition of critically ill children. Thus, this study aims, first of all, to explore the knowledge and nutritional practices of physicians and to identify their needs in terms of tools, then to evaluate the impact of these new tools on their knowledge and nutritional practices and finally to collect their opinions.

Methods:

I conducted qualitative one-on-one semi-structured interviews, before and after the introduction of tools, with physicians in PICU in a Swiss University Hospital. All medical fellows were included for step 1 and 2 and associate physicians for step 2. A different interview guide for both stages of the study was developed and used. Interviews were audio recorded, with data transcribed verbatim before being thematically analysed.

Results:

Twenty-two medical staff were interviewed, including seventeen medical fellows and five associate physicians. Tools that met the needs of physicians, a nutrition protocol and a "Nutrition" section in the computer system, were introduced. After their introduction, changes in nutritional practices have been observed, particularly related to nutritional knowledge. All the physicians interviewed said that they were more aware and attentive to nutrition and that the practices were more homogeneous.

Conclusion:

The introduction of tools that met the needs of physicians, a nutrition protocol and a "Nutrition" section in the computer system, has helped to improve nutritional knowledge and to change the nutritional practices of physicians in PICU.

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