



Immersion Health

Oncology | Nutrition | Primary Care

Malnutrition and Cancer

Here's an insult added to a tragedy:

A recent study¹ published in *Nutrition Journal* found that patients admitted to the hospital with a diagnosis of cancer have an astonishingly high rate of malnutrition. Specifically, over 70% were found to be malnourished, and over half of those were *severely* malnourished.

Two thoughts come to mind about this:

First, malnutrition was only assessed for these patients because they were part of a study. If this is true across the board, then hundreds of thousands of cancer patients are suffering from malnutrition without their attending physicians knowing this. Even if they did, nutritional therapies are virtually non-existent in the conventional hospital oncology setting. Intravenous nutritional therapy of the kind we do daily here at our clinic *could be done* regularly in the hospital as well. It just isn't.

Second, if malnutrition was found in over 70% of cancer patients upon *entering* the hospital, then to what extent might the malnutrition have *preceded* the cancer and contributed to the cancer itself?

The biggest risks for malnutrition among cancer patients in this study were smoking, having low income, having disabilities and being over 60 years old. In a health care system that actually focused on enhancing health and disease prevention rather than treating those already ill, each of these risk groups could be targeted for intensive nutritional programs.

Instead, malnourished cancer patients enter the hospital and are treated with nutrient-depleting therapies. We continue to be shocked that cancer patients are commonly given nutritional advice that amounts to, "Eat whatever you like, as much as you can eat." We actually had a patient who was told to melt ice cream and drink that if water doesn't taste good.

¹ <https://nutritionj.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12937-015-0113-1>

No one can be optimally healthy without adequate amounts of basic nutrients. We use IV therapy to replenish vitamins, minerals, and amino acids in cancer patients. Such therapies can dramatically enhance vitality and recovery from conventional therapies.

Maybe, *just maybe*, the conventional oncology world will someday realize that well-nourished patients do better than malnourished patients.

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