

# Improved nutritional care of malnourished older adults: a matter of interdisciplinary communication and collaboration

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## Rationale:

- Malnutrition is an important predictor of poor health status of older adults.
- Interprofessional communication and collaboration between older adults, their caregivers and health care and welfare professionals is expected to be effective in preventing and treating malnutrition.

**Aim:** To assess current collaboration and communication in nutritional care over the continuum of healthcare settings in the Netherlands.

Table 1: Themes with corresponding conclusions	
Theme	Conclusion
<b>Causes of malnutrition</b>	Physical and social aspects are viewed as important risk factors for malnutrition
<b>Knowledge and awareness</b>	Knowledge and awareness regarding malnutrition is low among all involved
<b>Recognition and diagnosis of malnutrition</b>	Lack of knowledge and awareness may impair timely recognition and diagnosis
<b>Communication</b>	Even though many tools already exist, communication between disciplines is poor
<b>Accountability</b>	Responsibility for nutritional care is low among all disciplines
<b>Food preparation and supply</b>	Food preparation and supply in different health care settings is below expected standards

**Methods:** This qualitative study consisted of 11 focus group interviews and five individual interviews. Interviews took place from November 2017-February 2018 and were held in three regions across the Netherlands. Participants included older adults, caregivers, and health care and welfare professionals. Discussion guides were developed to ensure all key concept areas were discussed. Interviews were transcribed and analysed using a thematic approach.

**Results:** Analysis of the transcripts revealed six themes (**table 1**) with corresponding conclusions.



**Conclusion:** Lack of communication and collaboration hinders continuity of nutritional care of older adults. Improving knowledge and establishing one coordinator of nutritional care is suggested to improve collaboration and communication across health care settings.

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