Dietitian’s Guide to Assessment and Documentation

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Foreword

This book does not pretend to encompass all aspects of general nutrition. Nevertheless, the author, driven to face with confidence the daily challenges of clinical nutrition, has embarked on arduous work that results in a very concise, yet comprehensive resource aimed at the generalist, dietitian or nutritionist, gastroenterologist, and student.

The objective is to bring forward current and emerging evidence regarding nutrition assessment and documentation. For example, obesity has attained epidemic proportions worldwide. In the United States, more than 30% of adults and 15% of children are obese and consequently are at risk for more than 36 different medical conditions. Premature deaths from obesity are approximately 300,000 annually; consumer expenditures for weight loss products are $45 billion; healthcare expenses for obesity are more than $100 billion per year. Malnutrition, on the other hand, although less prevalent than obesity, is a serious clinical issue in patients with HIV infection and other chronic clinical conditions such as liver cirrhosis.

These facts prompted a revolution in methods of nutritional assessment of the individual, and dietary and nutritional interactions with the disease aimed at changing the natural history and improving the quality of life. This process continues to evolve.

Jacqueline Morris has spent countless hours compiling the evidence to provide an efficient and meaningful learning experience. The book is organized into nine chapters, and elegantly provides information on core methods of nutritional assessment, diagnosis, approaches to management of weight gain and malnutrition, nutritional support, efficient documentation, and reasonable prevention. A full table of contents and references
are provided for the convenience of the reader. I am certain readers will enjoy this book and find it extremely useful in designing nutrition assessments and documenting the nutrition health of individual patients.

Prospere Remy, MD
Chief, Gastroenterology and Liver Disease
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Delivering nutrition care to your patient is a four-step process as outlined by the American Dietetic Association’s Nutrition Care Process:

1. Nutrition assessment
2. Nutrition diagnosis
3. Nutrition intervention
4. Nutrition monitoring and evaluation

Before you identify the problem or potential nutrition risk(s), it is important that you first review the medical chart, which gives information about the patient: diagnosis, social history, medical history, medication, laboratory data and assessment, and evaluations performed by other medical/clinical personnel. Reading the notes of other clinicians who have documented information about the patient provides necessary context for effective management of the condition(s) being assessed. Dietitians in private practice obtain this information from the referring physician and the patient or family.

The next step is to interview the patient to obtain diet history and other pertinent data to determine a solution to the existing problem or means by which to reduce the risk of a potential problem. With a chart review and patient interview, you can identify the nutrition problem and its etiology and provide nutrition intervention to address that problem.

To provide the appropriate intervention to meet the nutritional needs of the patient, you must have a clear understanding of the medical diagnosis and its nutritional implications. Once intervention is initiated, you must carefully monitor the patient to ensure that goals are met and the desired outcome is achieved.

Documenting findings, interventions, and outcomes in the medical record is critical to the nutrition care process—notes should paint a clear
picture without ambiguity. Details of proper documentation and steps in
the delivery of nutrition care to the patient are covered throughout this
book.

I have had the opportunity to present this topic to dietitians on multi-
ple occasions and was quite impressed with the outcome of the evalua-
tions. I believe it is helpful to have this information available to everyone
in the field of dietetics and nutrition, especially new dietitians. It can also
sharpen the skills of those already in practice. The materials in this book
have been carefully reviewed by physicians and peers, and I hope you will
find it a useful and helpful resource.
Introduction

The dietitian plays a critical role in the delivery of care to the patient. As an integral part of the healthcare team, you are responsible for helping to maintain good health and quality of life for the patients and clients you serve so well. You are more than just the “food person” that many make you out to be. You consult with physicians and other healthcare professionals to ensure the best possible outcome for their patients. However, as you execute your duties and responsibilities as a dietitian, it is extremely important that you keep abreast of the ever-changing science of medicine and nutrition because some information that you learned in school is no longer applicable today. You must have a working knowledge of the disease state that is being assessed.

To provide patients and clients with optimal care, dietitians must go below the surface and think like investigators, which is what they really are. The dietitian’s work can be described as that of a “nutritional status investigator.” While investigating the nutritional status of your patients/clients and implementing care, you must be careful to document with the law in mind because you never know when you will be called to defend what you wrote. Good documentation can keep you out of court as well as defend you in an investigation or a malpractice lawsuit.

The purpose of this book is to give details of the components of nutrition care assessment, referred to by the American Dietetic Association as the Nutrition Care Process, and to provide information on the legal aspects of documentation. It is intended to be used in collaboration with other texts that outline the nutrition care process as indicated by the American Dietetic Association. You are probably quite familiar with the phrase “if it is not documented, it was not done.” This book will help you avoid the pitfalls of improper documentation.
This book also provides an overview of common diseases and their effect on nutritional status, as well as a clear understanding of biochemical data and categories of medications as they relate to health and diseases. Included in this book you can find important information on patient teaching for specific medical conditions and acceptable abbreviations used in health care.
Acknowledgments

I would like to personally thank my friends, colleagues, and family whose support and encouragement made the publication of this book possible.

I would like to thank Sarah Barnes, my fellow dietitian, who first recommended me to speak on the topic of nutrition assessment and documentation to a group of more than 200 dietitians at the League 1199 Training and Upgrading Fund in 2005. This opportunity gave me the confidence to pursue writing this book, which is to be made available to new dietitians and to sharpen the skills of those with years of practice in dietetics and nutrition.

Special thanks to those who reviewed and edited the contents of this book. I am especially grateful to Prospere Remy, MD, chief of Gastroenterology and Liver Disease, Bronx Lebanon Hospital Center; Karen Formato, RD, director of Clinical Nutrition, Bronx Lebanon Hospital Center; MaryAlice Laub, RD, CNSD; Richard Tennant, RN; Maurice Harbon, PharmD; Geoffrey Lord, PharmD; and Arlene Spark, EdD, RD, FADA, FACN, coordinator of Nutrition at Hunter College.

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Thanks to my mom, Dorothy Brady, for her prayerful support; my dad and siblings, for being there for me. Thanks to my step-son, Matthew, for helping with the typing.

I especially want to thank Claudette Beckford, LD, and Sarah Addo-yobo, RD, CDN, MS, from Richmond Strategy, Inc. (formerly Richmond Children Center) for giving me my first opportunity to practice dietetics in New York. Thanks also to my preceptors at Danbury Hospital where I completed my dietetic internship.
Last, I would like to thank my patients, former employers, and current clients, who gave me the opportunity to grow and expand my expertise. I learned a lot from both my patients and colleagues.
About the Author

Jacqueline C. Morris, RD, MPH, CDN, hails from the beautiful island of Jamaica, where she started her career in dietetics and nutrition. She graduated from the University of Technology in 1986 with an associate degree in Food, Nutrition, and Dietetics. She worked as an assistant dietitian at Falmouth Hospital and taught food and nutrition to high school students.

In 1993, she migrated to the United States, where she pursued her bachelor’s degree in nutrition at Lehman College and later earned a Master of Public Health degree from New York University. She was the editor of the Beth Israel Cancer Center Newsletter, to which she also contributed several nutrition articles, including “Phyte’ Back with Phytochemicals.” She worked as a clinical nutrition manager at the Bronx Lebanon Special Care Center for a number of years and developed educational materials for both staff and patients.

In 2003, Ms. Morris started her own consulting firm, Annex Nutrition Services, in Elmsford, New York. Annex Nutrition Services offers continuing education credits to dietitians, nurses, dietetic technicians, and students, as well as private counseling both at home and in the office setting. Ms. Morris works in collaboration with other companies to provide wellness programs at the corporate level and is a service provider for various healthcare agencies.
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