

HNC on Healthcare

The Healthcare Nutrition Council (HNC) represents the manufacturers of enteral nutrition formulas and parenteral solutions, supplies and equipment. HNC is committed to helping patients maintain and improve their nutritional status by raising the awareness of the impact of malnutrition on health outcomes, advocating for appropriate use and reimbursement for the delivery of nutritional care, as well as working with healthcare providers in delivering quality products to patients who rely on enteral nutrition formulas, oral nutrition supplements, and parenteral solutions. HNC supports a healthcare system that equips and incentivizes practitioners to diagnose, treat and take steps to prevent malnutrition and improve quality of care and patient outcomes.

It is widely recognized that nutritional status plays a significant role in health outcomes and healthcare costs. Malnutrition, particularly when not diagnosed and treated, increases the cost of care due to increased complications, longer hospitalizations, more readmissions, continued institutionalizations and ongoing healthcare services. Additionally, malnourished patients, including patients with nutrition related or metabolic issues, are frequently readmitted to the hospital. Data also show that as many as half of hospitalized adults are undernourished, yet malnutrition is widely underdiagnosed and often goes untreated.

As malnutrition and related complications can exacerbate chronic diseases, certain medical conditions and can result in complications and comorbidities, HNC strongly supports a healthcare system that will increase patient access to nutritional care, incentivize quality and preventive interventions, and promote routine nutritional screenings, assessment, diagnosis and intervention with therapeutic nutrition products when indicated. As changes to the healthcare system are contemplated, HNC encourages policymakers to consider input from healthcare providers, patient and family groups, and other stakeholders when developing a new framework that will impact millions of Americans. HNC encourages any reforms increase patient access to essential products, like therapeutic nutrition, further evaluate the positive contribution of preventive care on overall costs, and prioritize measures and incentives that reward healthcare providers for providing quality care tailored specifically for a patient's individual condition.

HNC supports a variety of specific elements within the healthcare system to increase patient access to the lifesaving products that HNC members manufacture and distribute.

First, many patients who utilize HNC products have pre-existing medical conditions and diseases in which their digestive systems cannot breakdown or absorb nutrients that are essential to their body's maintenance and metabolic function. Lack of access to such products will result in malnutrition, macronutrient deficiencies, and a host of other complications that will decrease the patient's quality of life, potential for recovery, and result in increased healthcare costs.

Second, many seniors enrolled in Medicare require additional medical attention to prevent and treat conditions, such as malnutrition, and many of these patients frequently utilize the lifesaving products provided by HNC members. These patients should have access to healthcare services and, in particular, they should be provided with suitable nutrition screenings/assessments and access to therapeutic products when at risk of becoming malnourished or they are suffering from malnutrition. With many vulnerable senior patients enrolled in the Medicare system, HNC encourages the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to research and improve the system's efficiencies. Specifically, Medicare efficiencies can be strengthened with the implementation of four new malnutrition electronic clinical quality measures that would promote systematic nutrition screening, assessment, diagnosis, and appropriate nutrition intervention.

Third, HNC supports allowing all patients the opportunity to receive high quality care in the setting of their choice. Care should be received in the setting most comfortable and conducive to the patient's prescribed treatment or care plan.

Fourth, HNC values a healthcare system that increases educational opportunities for those looking to become healthcare practitioners and continuing education for those currently in the healthcare workforce. Many patients, especially those who are malnourished, do not receive a proper and timely diagnosis sometimes due to a lack of nutrition education among practitioners. It is essential that healthcare professionals and medical staff be incentivized to receive the highest quality education and training and continue to hone their skills through continuing education. This will ensure that patients receive the highest quality care and will lead to more accurate diagnoses and treatments. Specifically, enhancing nutrition-based education and training will contribute significantly in reducing the diagnosis gap for patients at-risk for malnutrition or are malnourished.

Overall, HNC supports a healthcare system that increases patient access to products deemed clinically necessary, one that prepares and motivates practitioners to properly diagnose and treat patients, and a system that rewards innovation in products and services.