



Guide to the NSQHS Standards for community health services

July 2015

The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) is the national association of the dietetic profession with over 5800 members, and branches in each state and territory. DAA is a leader in nutrition and advocates for food and nutrition for healthier people and healthier nations. DAA appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Guide to the NSQHS Standards for community health services* by the Australian Commission on Safety and quality in Health Care (ACSQHC).

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DAA interest in this consultation

DAA is concerned about the safety and quality of care provided through community health services, particularly in relation to matters of nutrition.

DAA is responsible for the Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) program as the platform for self regulation of the profession in Australia. APDs are qualified and credentialed to provide medical nutrition therapy to individuals, to lead community nutrition programs and to work with organisations to develop, implement and maintain nutrition systems which meet the needs of consumers.

Recommendations

DAA recommends that the ACSQHC amends the NSQHS Standards for community health services to address nutrition care, including the identification, treatment and prevention of malnutrition.

Discussion

Inclusion of nutrition

DAA supports accreditation of health services in a variety of settings in the community to promote safety and quality. Where possible the same, or at least very similar, standards should be used across care settings in the private, public and non-government sectors to promote consistency of implementation and consumer confidence.

The draft NSQHS Standards in community health care cover a number of important aspects of care. However they are virtually silent on the subject of nutrition, as are the current NSQHS Standards for hospitals and day procedure services. DAA is pleased however that the ACSQHC has recognised the importance of nutrition in response to a report submitted by DAA in January 2015 outlining the burden of malnutrition in hospitals and the community, contributing factors and strategies for consideration to address this longstanding problem. Correspondence with the ACSQHC confirms that nutrition will be included in the revised NSQHS Standards for hospitals and day procedure services.

Reference to allied health care

It is pleasing to see the reference to allied health in Table 1: Applicability of NSQHS Standards to community health services on page 9. At least nutrition is mentioned in this table. However DAA recommends that 'nutrition' should be replaced with 'dietetics and nutrition' or 'dietetics'. Dietitians are the health professionals qualified and credentialed in nutrition and dietetics, and recognised by Medicare, Department of Veteran's Affairs and private health funds. DAA would be pleased to provide further information to the ACSQHC detailing how in Australia dietitians may also be nutritionists, but that the reverse is not true.

Attachments

DAA report to the ACSQHC on malnutrition January 2015