



Development of the Australian Mental Health Care Classification

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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 dietetics and advocates for better food and nutrition for healthier people and healthier nations. DAA appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Development of the Australian Mental Health Care Classification* by the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority (IHPA).

Contact Person: Annette Byron
Position: Senior Policy Officer
Organisation: Dietitians Association of Australia
Address: 1/8 Phipps Close, Deakin ACT 2600
Telephone: 02 6163 5202
Facsimile: 02 6282 9888
Email: abyron@daa.asn.au

DAA interest in this consultation

The Dietitians Association of Australia is the regulator for the dietetic profession in Australia through the Accredited Practising Dietitian program. The APD credential is required by Medicare, Department of Veterans Affairs, private health funds and many employers.

The interest of APDs in this consultation includes the following

- APDs provide medical nutrition therapy in various practice settings. One in five Australians experiences mental illness at any point in time, and consequently any client presenting for advice on nutrition for the management of diabetes, coeliac disease etc may also have mental health as a significant co-morbidity, such as obesity and depression.¹
- APDs provide medical nutrition therapy to clients with eating disorders as individual health professionals or as a member of a multidisciplinary team.
- People treated with medication for mental illness may experience unintended consequences of physical disease such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity etc.² APDs provide medical nutrition therapy to individuals for such co-morbidities.
- APDs direct, or contribute to the management of, food services in hospitals and other institutions which provide care to people with mental health.³

Comments

DAA is pleased to see that the consultation paper recognises that chronic disease management impacts on mental health patients, and agrees that it is important that “the cost drivers for the aggregate consumption of healthcare are separately identified and considered as well as those applicable to the individual components of care”.

DAA encourages the IHPA to seek the input of allied health practitioners in the development of the Classification to ensure that interventions of allied health are considered. This is clearly relevant to traditional areas of engagement such as APDs in eating disorder units, but should extend beyond this to chronic disease management etc. DAA considers that much more could be done to address chronic disease in mental health by APDs and other allied health practitioners supporting patients with lifestyle self management, but at present this is not well recognised by the health care system and funding mechanisms in particular. Having a robust classification would be useful as a funding tool and quality of care tool to improve this situation.

Poor dental health is also a significant burden for people with mental illness.⁴ Poor dental health may directly affect risk of chronic disease, and also limit the capacity to

eat a healthy diet. This might be considered along with other co-morbidities in the development of the classification.

DAA understands that costing studies will be undertaken at a later stage. At that time it will be appropriate to capture costs related to

- individual patient attributable activity for dietetic interventions with patients with mental illness
- non-individual patient attributable time spent by APDs in food service activities or in group programs for medical nutrition therapy or lifestyle management
- enteral nutrition or oral nutrition support which might be used for mental health inpatients e.g. anorexia nervosa patients.

References

1. DAA Mental Health in Tertiary Curricula for Dietitians Project funded by the Mental Health Workforce Division of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. 2008
2. Newcomer JW. Antipsychotic medications: Metabolic and cardiovascular risk. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*. 2007; 68 (Suppl 4); 8 - 13
3. Nutrition standards for consumers of inpatient mental health services in NSW. Agency for Clinical Innovation 2013.
4. Kisley S, Lake-Hui Q, Pais J, Lallo R, Newell J. Advanced dental disease in people with severe mental illness: systematic review and meta-analysis. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*. 2011; 199: 187 – 193.