

The Development of a Nutrition Team to Support People affected by Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Aim of the Project

The aim of the project is to **raise awareness** of healthy diet choices and to **enskill and empower** service-users to optimise their diet. This will have a positive effect on their general **well-being** and enable them to better **manage specific symptoms**.

Development of the Service

The Multi-Disciplinary Team, formed in January 2017, includes a **Dietitian**, a **Speech & Language Therapist**, a **Clinical Counsellor**, an **Occupational Therapist** and an **Expert Service-User / Admin Support**.

A preliminary survey of service-users had revealed a strong need for more information about diet and nutrition, focusing on fatigue, bladder and bowel management, weight loss and emotional well-being / psychological support.

From this survey, we developed a four-pronged approach which continues to evolve:

1.....

INFORMATION / RESOURCES

Development of a range of paper resources used to promote good nutrition. Used within existing services, such as the Fatigue Management Programme. Also used within clinic sessions and made available to everyone throughout the Centre.

These included:

- A range of 9 "Healthy Snack" leaflets including Oats, Popcorn, Cereal Bars, Yoghurt and Choosing a Healthy Biscuit
- Food and Fatigue
- Dietary Guidelines for people taking drugs requiring a modified diet
- Menu Planning
- Food and Mood

2.....

WORKSHOPS

Planning and delivery of workshops for people with MS and their carers/families:

- Food Groups & Menu Planning; based around the "Eat Well Plate".
- Nutrition for MS – what should I eat?
- Special Diets & MS; will they provide all the nutrition my body needs?
- Simple Food Prep for MS; using strategies, equipment and pre-prepped products
- MS & the Mediterranean Diet; to plan healthy meals
- Swallowing Workshop; the mechanics of eating, drinking and swallowing with strategies to chew and swallow safely and easily
- Mind Over Munchies; a psychological approach to achieving a healthy diet & lifestyle
- MS & IBS/Bowel/Bladder Management through Diet; how a good dietary regime can minimise symptoms

3.....

CLINIC

- Referrals from the wider Rehabilitation Team in the Centre
- Appointments jointly-led by the Dietitian and Clinical Counsellor
- Many referrals have co-existing issues, including weight reduction, malnutrition, gastrointestinal problems, diabetes, drug side-effects, bladder or bowel issues
- Common significant nutritional issues identified during the clinics include low calcium and iron intakes, low fibre and fluid intakes
- Additional contributory factors also identified include: fatigue, psychological and motivation issues, cognitive difficulties, swallowing problems and physical aspects affecting the practical elements of shopping and food preparation
- Service-users receive 2-3 appointments, either face-to-face or by email or telephone

4.....

CLINICAL PATHWAYS

Whilst the ultimate aim of the programme is for successful self-management of their nutrition, care pathways sign-post service-users to the most appropriate follow-on service for their individual needs if required. These include:

- In-house workshops and group programmes
- Other therapies such as Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Clinical Counselling
- Specialist NHS services, for example Gastrointestinal and Diabetes Clinics
- Commercial or charitable weight management support



"Great to meet the whole team and have the opportunity for additional individual information and support."

"Good to have leaflets to keep."

"Healthy snacks very much needed and appreciated."

"Can't wait for the recipe book!"

"I feel inspired to improve my diet."

"Plenty of food for thought!"



AUTHORS:

Claire Fenlon – Registered Dietitian
Carolyn Angell – Speech and Language Therapist / Clinical Counsellor
Amy Smissen – Occupational Therapist
Jules Maw – Expert Service-User / Admin Support

REFERENCES:

¹New Eatwell Guide Public Health England, 2016
²"At the MS Society we believe a balanced diet can play a role in helping people with MS to manage their condition" MS Society
³"Several MS symptoms can be made less severe by providing the right fuel for your body" MS Trust
⁴"Research into Specific MS Diets has not provided conclusive evidence of benefits and deciding on the right diet can be confusing" MS Society

WHY?

The service is important on a number of levels:

1. It is widely accepted that a healthy balanced diet is beneficial to the physical and psychological well-being of everyone, regardless of a diagnosis of MS;¹
2. Optimising nutrition can help to manage the symptoms of MS;^{2,3}
3. There is increasing promotion of "special" MS diets, which can be poorly evidenced and misleading;⁴
4. There is an increase in dietary implications linked to taking new disease modifying medications with limited guidelines;
5. MS symptoms can significantly impede the ability to achieve optimal nutrition.

FUTURE PLANS

To continue to develop and grow existing services:

- Interactive Workshop Programme; rescheduling some workshops and introducing new ones
- 2 to 1 clinics for complex cases, referring on to external specialist clinics, such as diabetes and continence, as required
- Paper-based resources; including the healthy snacks leaflet range and meal planning and recipe packs

To develop new initiatives in 2019 including:

- A Weight Reduction Programme
 - To encompass all approaches to weight management, including Nutrition, Psychology, Practicality and Exercise
 - Delivered by the nutrition team, drawing on the expertise of the wider Rehabilitation Team
 - Personal goals will be reviewed at each session and adjusted as necessary
- Online Nutritional Advice on the Centre website.