Dietitians in aged care: a recipe to save millions - Media release

Engaging Accredited Practising Dietitians (APDs) to support food and nutrition in aged care is projected to save more than $80 million per year which would otherwise be spent on costly malnutrition treatment.

That's just one of the revelations outlined as part of eight aged care position statements released today by Dietitians Australia.

"Older Australians have a right to food that is nutritious, familiar, culturally and medically appropriate, as well as to eat appetising meals in an enjoyable setting," said Julie Dundon, AdvAPD and one of Dietitians Australia's Aged Care Subject Matter Leads.

"These position statements highlight how dietitians can provide support across the spectrum of aged care and help improve the health and quality of life of our aging population. This includes mandatory malnutrition screening – and quarterly re-screening – which should be embedded within community care and aged care homes."

"Weight loss and malnutrition are not natural parts of aging. It is vital that we take action to tackle this costly issue. Regular screening will help stop malnutrition in its tracks and prompt aged care homes to address the issues which are contributing to malnutrition," said Dundon.

The eight position statements outline key recommendations to ensure older Australians receive the best possible nutrition care. These span the spectrum of care including:

- Importance of Food in Aged Care
- Malnutrition in Aged Care
- Consumer Choice and Dignity

- Oral Health, Swallowing and Hydration in Aged Care
- Menu Planning and Innovation in Aged Care
- Food Production and Presentation in Aged Care
- Mealtimes and Dining Experience in Aged Care
- Aged Care Staff Skills and Training

The release of the position statements comes ahead of the National Congress on Food, Nutrition, and the Dining Experience, being held in Sydney in mid-February. Run by the Department of Health and the Maggie Beer Foundation, leaders in aged care will meet to discuss issues facing the sector.

In January, Dietitians Australia also launched a virtual issue of the Nutrition & Dietetics Journal. This issue collates recently published peer-reviewed research on the topic of nutrition and aged care.

“The collection of research explores food choice and National Meal Guidelines, the provision of highquality food services in residential aged care facilities, and key clinical conditions such as diabetes and malnutrition,” said Judi Porter, Journal Editor in Chief, Fellow of Dietitians Australia, and one of Dietitians Australia’s Aged Care Subject Matter Leads.

“This research, along with the Journal’s previous virtual issue on malnutrition, highlights the considerable scientific evidence on the importance of nutrition for older Australians.”

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Media enquiries

For media enquiries and interviews, contact our Media Officer on 0409 661 920.

Note to editors: Dietitians Australia is the leading voice of nutrition in Australia, representing dietitians nationally and advocating for healthier communities. Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia.