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Ms Marie Malica

Executive Officer

Clinical Oncology Society of Australia

RE: Survey of Australian cancer clinicians' awareness, perceptions and practices regarding cancer-related malnutrition and sarcopenia

Dear Marie,

I am writing to thank you and the COSA membership for supporting this survey. In total 111 Australian cancer clinicians participated in the study with good representation across disciplines, states/ territories and regional/ metropolitan areas of practice. The study has identified areas that will be pertinent to address in the position statement currently under development by the Nutrition Group on cancer-related malnutrition and sarcopenia.

I have included an abstract of the findings from the survey which has been presented at the Multinational Association of Supportive Care in Cancer conference in San Francisco in June. An abstract is also planned for the Australian Society of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition conference and the 2019 COSA ASM. A manuscript of the survey results is also under preparation and planned for publication as open access.

Kind regards,



Nicole Kiss

Chair, COSA Nutrition Group

AUSTRALIAN CANCER CLINICIANS' AWARENESS, PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES REGARDING CANCER-RELATED MALNUTRITION AND SARCOPENIA

Background: Cancer-related malnutrition and sarcopenia are independently associated with reduced survival, increased treatment toxicities and poorer function. International evidence-based guidelines exist to guide nutrition screening and interventions. However, despite the severe consequences, little is known about Australian cancer clinicians' awareness of these conditions and practices relating to their identification and management. This study aimed to determine clinician awareness, understanding and perceptions of malnutrition and sarcopenia in people with cancer.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey of Australian cancer clinicians was undertaken between November 2018 and January 2019. The 30-item online survey was circulated through professional organisations and health services.

Results: The 111 participants represented dietetic (38%), nursing (34%), medical (14%) and allied health (14%) clinicians. Overall, 86% and 88% clinicians were aware of accepted definitions of malnutrition and sarcopenia, respectively, with 89% agreeing these were extremely or very important conditions in the overall management of people with cancer. However, perception of responsibility for identification of these conditions varied considerably. Further, 26% and 47% of clinicians had limited or no confidence in their ability to identify malnutrition and sarcopenia, respectively. Greatest barriers to identification and management of malnutrition were access to tools or skills required and lack of services to manage malnourished patients. Greatest barriers to identification and management of sarcopenia were lack of confidence and lack of services to manage patients with sarcopenia.

Conclusions: Awareness of cancer-related malnutrition and sarcopenia are high among Australian cancer clinicians. Although, the identification and management of these conditions is limited by variation in perceived responsibility, lack of confidence and insufficient services to manage patients with malnutrition or sarcopenia. A national position statement documenting best evidence is under preparation to support optimal practice.