The "protected discharge" project at Campoligure rehabilitation nursing home: telemedicine as an implementation strategy to prevent the risk of malnutrition in elderlies

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Background and aims

Malnutrition is widespread among elderly patients residing in rehabilitation nursing homes (RNH). This negatively affects quality and life expectancy, even after discharge. Technological innovation can help to combat the risk of malnutrition. Therefore, we aim to offer a nutritional protocol to RNH, which includes a telemedicine service after discharge, to prevent malnutrition and better monitor nutritional status at home.

Methods

At Campoligure RNH, Genoa, we developed the nutritional protocol, "protected discharge", structured as follow:

0) During the stay: goals definition based on anthropometric values (weight, BMI) and data collected during the stay with the aid of validated tools (Mini Nutritional Assessment test, food history), appropriateness check of nutrition plan (e.g enteral nutrition) and training of staff and patient/caregiver for telemedicine service.

1) The RNH specialist doctor and the RNH dietitian conduct a televisit with patient and its caregiver, to explain the care pathway and telemedicine modalities (e.g. instructions for use of devices).

2) At 30, 60 and 90 days: televisits with dietitian to check nutritional values against those measured during the stay.

Results and conclusion

If telemedicine is applied correctly, the project could allow nutritional monitoring in the patient's family context, which would improve his/her quality of life and that of the caregiver. The risk of malnutrition, costs, lenght of stay and admission to the E.R. could potentially be reduced. However, we expect that difficulties, e.g. in the use of devices or intermediation with the caregiver, may emerge from the remote mode, resulting sometimes in less reliable assistance.