



ABSTRACT

Ethics and nutrition safety in patient care during COVID-19 pandemic

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Nutrition Battling on Pandemic COVID-19: How to Survive

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The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has impacted all aspects of our population. Ethical dilemmas related to the care of patients in the COVID-19 pandemic need to be rapidly addressed by multidisciplinary bioethics committees, with the development of policies and procedures to assist providers in making difficult allocation decisions. Recent ethical considerations regarding allocation of scarce resources, such as mechanical ventilators, have been proposed. These can apply to other disciplines such as nutrition support, although decisions regarding nutrition support have a diminished potential for devastating outcomes. The nutrition support professionals are pivotal in assessing the patient's overall condition and need for, if any, nutrition interventions. Given the dangers to the healthcare worker through contact with patients infected with COVID-19, nutrition practitioners should be concerned about nutrition support prescriptions that require repeated contact with the patient. Increasing the frequency of visits is likely to increase the risk to workers via repeated exposures to infected patients and increased consumption of personal protective equipment. This could potentially lead to the loss of a scarce resource, specifically the healthcare worker who could become ill or quarantined from exposure, to say nothing of the human cost if the healthcare worker succumbs to COVID-19. Nutrition support professionals should also be involved in the process of scarce nutrition support resource allocation. Nutrition support professionals should be represented in bioethics committees when nutrition issues arise. Recommendations by the nutrition support professionals or a nutrition support team should be guided by the benefit-vs-risk/burden evaluation. Nutrition support clinicians should make appropriate recommendations regarding nutrition interventions, based on anticipated benefit, availability of products, cost, and risk to providers. The nutrition support professionals should communicate with peers in other institutions in their communities to reach consensus on protocols, thus adding to strength and uniformity of such approaches.

Keywords: COVID-19, nutrition support, ethical

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