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Assessment of scope and quality of nutrition services in patient management in selected health facilities in Tanzania

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Abstract

Inadequate nutrition services remain a critical barrier to optimal patient care in many low- and middle-income countries, including Tanzania. Comprehensive assessments and specialized interventions are often underutilized in clinical practice. This study evaluates the scope and quality of nutrition service delivery across Tanzanian health facilities, involving 46 participants, including nutritionists, dietitians, and healthcare providers from 28 facilities. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 29.0. The findings demonstrate that basic nutritional assessments (e.g., weight, height, and mid-upper arm circumference) are performed in over 70% of cases, yet advanced assessments like body composition analysis (body fat, muscle mass, and visceral fat) are significantly underused, occurring in less than 30% of cases. Nutrition Diagnostic accuracy was also suboptimal, with only 11% of participants correctly completing the Nutrition Diagnosis using the PES (Problem, Etiology, Symptoms) statement. While over 90% of participants delivered nutrition education and counseling, more advanced interventions such as enteral and parenteral nutrition were available in fewer than 40% of cases. Alarming, a severe shortage of clinical nutrition staff was identified, with one nutritionist covering more than 200 hospital beds. Participants with more than four years of experience, especially those with bachelor's or postgraduate degrees, were significantly more effective in delivering quality nutrition services ($p = 0.019$). It is recommended that targeted efforts to

increase human resource allocation, integrate nutrition into broader healthcare quality initiatives, and enhance nutrition continuous professional development. Expanding and fostering evidence-based research are vital to strengthening nutrition services and improving patient outcomes in Tanzania's healthcare system.

Keywords: *Dietitian; Health facility; Hospital Nutrition; Nutritionist; Nutrition services; Quality*