Medical Nutrition Therapy: An Integral Part of Patient Care

Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) provided by Registered Dietitians (RDs) is a nutrition centered care plan that focuses on the assessment, nutrition diagnosis, treatment plan, evaluation and continued monitoring of a patient/client. MNT has been shown to be effective in wellness, disease prevention, and disease management. MNT improves the health and quality of life for individuals with certain disease conditions and can reduce hospitalization, prescription drug use, and "illness" visits with their physician. Through use of evidenced based nutrition practice guidelines, the value of MNT has been proven when RDs provide the services.

MNT provided by RDs in the patient centered medical home

Primary care settings can incorporate medical nutrition therapy provided by a licensed, registered dietitian in the patient centered medical home in the following ways:

- Primary care settings can include registered dietitians on site at their clinic. As a cost-effective professional with nutrition expertise, registered dietitians can provide MNT to individuals or groups of patients as needed. Registered dietitians can also develop wellness programs, create up-to-date materials for patient education, and help to monitor and track patient data (weight, BMI - body mass index, and labs).

- Primary care physicians can develop a working relationship with independent RD consultants or local hospital outpatient RDs so that referrals may be made as needed. RDs would then report back to the primary care team to maintain open communication and provide a continuity of care.

- Registered dietitians can interact with patients over the phone and internet, offering on-line consulting and educational services as an alternative to face-to-face meetings.

There are many roles registered dietitians can have in the patient centered medical home model. RDs can play a vital role in the health and wellness of patients and should play an active role in this care model.

To find a local registered dietitian visit

www.eatrightohio.org

Click on find a Registered Dietitian
Registered Dietitians Improve Health Outcomes

Health outcomes can be improved by medical nutrition therapy (MNT) provided by a registered dietitian within Patient Centered Medical Homes. According to the Academy, the following benefits were found.

**Overweight/obesity:** MNT provided to overweight and obese adults for less than six months yields significant weight losses of approximately one to two pounds per week. MNT provided from six to twelve months yields significant mean weight losses of up to 10% of body weight with maintenance of this weight loss beyond one year.

**Diabetes control:** Studies evaluating the effectiveness of diabetes MNT provided for three to six months by a registered dietitian reported reductions in A1C ranging from 0.25% to 2.9%, depending on the type and duration of diabetes. Multiple studies of diabetes MNT showed sustained improvements in A1C at twelve months and longer.

**Blood pressure control:** MNT provided by a registered dietitian can also aid in lowering blood pressure in adults with hypertension. Studies show that MNT provided for less than six months leads to significant reductions (~5 mmHg) in both systolic and diastolic blood pressure. MNT provided from six to twelve months reported similar significant reductions in blood pressure with sustained reductions in blood pressure beyond one year.

Patient Centered Medical Homes are encouraged to include the services of a registered dietitian in order to make a significant impact on their patients’ health outcomes.

Payment Streams for Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT)

**Medicaid:** Medical Nutrition Therapy is covered for all nutrition-related ICD 9 diagnosis codes. MNT codes are 97802, 97803, 97804. Dietitians are not yet independent providers, so the MNT codes must be billed via a Medicaid provider’s NPI, using the AE modifier. See OAC 5101:3-4-34 (15).

**Medicare:** The Registered Dietitian is an independent provider for Medical Nutrition Therapy for diabetes and renal disease in Medicare, using 97802, 97803, 98704. Obesity counseling can be provided by the dietitian in the primary care setting and billed by the primary care practitioner – “incident to” CMS Decision Memo CAG-00423N.

**Private insurance:** Many private insurance companies (e.g. Aetna, Anthem) and some company benefits (e.g. Walmart) cover medical nutrition therapy by the Registered Dietitian, especially for diabetes, heart disease and renal disease. These plans vary on diagnoses and coverage.

Registered Dietitians Deliver Cost-Effective Care

The Lewin Group documented an 8.6% reduction in hospital utilization and a 16.9% reduction in physician visits associated with MNT for patients with cardiovascular disease. The group additionally documented a 9.5% reduction in hospital utilization and a 23.5% reduction in physician visits when MNT was provided to persons with diabetes mellitus. For more information on the effectiveness of MNT services, visit www.andevicencelibrary.com/MNT.