

# Assessment of knowledge, attitude and practice of nurses regarding Enteral Nutrition (EN) at a Military hospital

Londolani Ramuada; Lizl Veldsman & Renée Blaauw

*Division of Human Nutrition, Stellenbosch University*

**Background:** Enteral nutrition support plays a vital role in reducing malnutrition in hospitalised patients, and its provision is primarily a nurse's role. Therefore, nurses need to have adequate knowledge and a positive attitude with regard to enteral nutrition.

**Objectives:** The objectives of this study are to determine the knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding enteral nutrition learnt during the undergraduate qualification of nursing personnel at the nursing college of 1 Military Hospital and to determine differences based on professional rank.

**Method:** A descriptive, cross-sectional design with an analytical component was used to collect data from military nurses through self-administered questionnaires. A score of 80% and above was rated as adequate knowledge, and questions regarding attitude were measured by means of a Likert scale. The data collected was captured using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics were employed to describe the results of the study participants; Chi-Square tests were applied to determine the level of association between groups, and correlations were used to determine relationships between continuous variables. A p-value of <0.05 was used to test the hypothesis.

**Results:** In total, 207 (86.2% response rate) questionnaires were completed and captured. The average knowledge score was 46.3%. Participants scored above 80% in the individual questions relating to enteral nutrition as part of the medical treatment and the definition of EN. More than two-thirds (75.4%) of the participants consider themselves competent to administer enteral nutrition and have protocols in their workplace (29.3%), with 79.6% referring to them once or twice per month. The most common sources of nutrition knowledge are in-service training (24.9%) and the nursing college (20.6%). Participants prefer lectures (45.4%) provided by the dietician to upgrade their nutrition knowledge. No significant differences were found between knowledge and professional rank or in the relationship between knowledge and years of working experience ( $r = -0.01$ ;  $p=0.85$ ).

**Conclusion:** Nursing personnel have inadequate enteral nutrition knowledge, irrespective of their professional rank and experience. However, they are perceived to have positive attitudes towards the importance and administration of enteral nutrition. Future research should focus on whether continual in-service training improves the knowledge and practice of enteral nutrition among nurses.