

## **Reviewer's report**

**Title:** Study protocol: Cost-effectiveness of transmural nutritional support in malnourished elderly patients in comparison with usual care

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 28 October 2009

**Reviewer:** Clare Corish

### **Reviewer's report:**

This paper provides the protocol for a study that has not yet begun. However, given that such work has not been undertaken to date and that evidence to support the provision of nutritional support after discharge in older malnourished patients urgently needs to be determined, I would agree with publishing the protocol. It is important that clinical nutrition researchers and practitioners are made aware that such a study will be undertaken.

The study protocol details a comprehensive attempt to provide evidence for the provision of nutritional support in a meaningful way. Although scientifically, the study protocol could be criticised for trying to investigate the effects of more than one variable in a single study, the protocol can also be defended as it is likely that it requires a combination of factors to improve nutritional status and clinical outcomes in older malnourished patients and to test one variable alone is insufficient. The protocol authors have devised an intervention which models current best clinical practice in the treatment of undernutrition in older patients. They are proposing to test if this is efficacious in terms of outcome and socioeconomic data and are to be commended on this attempt.

### **Queries/suggestions (Minor)**

I have a number of minor queries/suggestions as follows:

1. Why cannot knee height be used as a surrogate in the study rather than recalled height?
2. Please include units of measurement throughout the paper.
3. What is the plan if a large number of those randomised into the control group are referred for nutritional care? Is this likely to happen given that these patients are all malnourished?
4. How feasible is it to measure REE using a hood with older ill patients?

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests