

WHY CARE ABOUT NUTRITION AND EATING HABITS IN EARLY LIFE? IMPACT ON HEALTHY AGING



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Background

- Increase of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), a major global health concern, has happened too fast thus suggests pivotal role of epigenetic phenomena.
- In the first 1000 days (conception - 2 yr), as critical window of opportunity to shape both short and long-term health, nutrition plays a crucial role.
- Meeting the specific nutritional needs in this period can positively influence health outcome throughout life and therefore represents **the first step towards healthy aging**. Otherwise, an imbalanced intake of nutrients can increase risk of NCDs in later life.
- Feeding difficulties (FDs) are among the most common pediatric problems. 25-30% of parents report feeding problems. 1-2% have serious problems, early feeding disorders (EFDs), that significantly increase the risk of malnutrition and can adversely affect healthy aging.

Material & Methods

- Medical chart retrospective analysis of children who attended Pediatric department due to FDs in the past two-year.
- Total of 174 children with nutrition-related disorders were treated (FDs and eating disorders) in this period

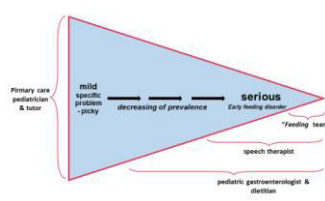
The aim of this research was to analyze the characteristics of children with FDs in our department and applied therapeutic interventions.

Results

- 57/174 children, average age 16.31 ± 9.2 months, had FDs, in analyzed period
- Only 6/57 had a severe form (EFDs), while rest had mild form of FDs.
- Most prevalent was selective form of FDs, and infantile anorexia the rarest.
- On average, the difficulties lasted for 7.29 ± 5.32 month before treatment.
- Organic diseases were excluded (GERD, food allergy, celiac disease)
- 40/57 children presented with failure to thrive and 35/57 had signs of malnutrition. Regarding risk factors, 24/57 children had psychomotor development difficulties and 13/57 had perinatal complications.
- Therapeutic interventions implied parental reassurance, education on feeding patterns and nutritional supplementations.
- Only children with EFDs were included in further multidisciplinary treatment.



Children with feeding difficulties (FD)



Conclusion

Feeding difficulties are common in pediatric practice, but are not seen as a potentially serious problem that can have long-standing health effects. When recognized early, the intervention is simple and significantly reduces the risk of malnutrition and the negative impact on healthy aging.

Thus, timely recognition and intervention are an important goal both for families and health professionals.