

The importance of the nutritionist in the prevention and treatment of chronic non-communicable diseases

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ABSTRACT

The study in question sought to highlight the importance of nutritional monitoring performed by the professional nutritionist in the prevention and treatment of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). As well as reflecting on the importance of diet in the preventive care of NCDs and in their treatment, it shows the risk factors of the diseases and discusses how they can be avoided with nutritional monitoring, as well as points out some functional foods that have been found to be beneficial in the fight against these diseases. The research method of this article was a literature review, and full articles were searched to foster the study, laws, resolutions and quantitative and qualitative data to support the article. It can be concluded from the research carried out in this article that the nutritionist is the qualified and indicated professional to prevent and treat NCDs, and their performance in society can reduce health expenses, as well as reduce the prevalence of diseases by adopting diet therapy as prevention and treatment of chronic non-communicable diseases.

Keywords: Importance of the nutritionist, Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases, Prevention and treatment of NCDs.

INTRODUCTION

Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases are highly prevalent diseases and have a great aggravating power, causing functional disabilities that impair quality of life, as stated by the Ministry of Health (MS, 2021). Mortality rates and functional disabilities are very high and although the longevity of individuals is simultaneously increasing, quality of life, due to the aggravating power of these diseases, has been decreasing considerably according to data collected by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019).

Although these diseases are influenced by genetic predisposition, there are still many other risk factors to be considered for their acquisition. Factors such as inadequate diet, smoking, lack of physical activity, alcoholism, and social determinants are the main influencers (MS, 2021).

Most of NCDs are irreversible diseases, that is, once they are acquired, there is no way to cure them. But there are ways to prevent as well as treat them. To prevent them, it is more than essential to take periodic health care, thus facilitating the early diagnosis of the risks that can lead to the acquisition of some of these diseases. Follow-up by an entire multidisciplinary team is recommended for individuals with NCDs (Gomes, Lopes, and Alvim, 2021).

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In addition, although the multidisciplinary team is essential, the exclusive nutritional follow-up with the nutritionist should not be neglected, who should always be present in the care of individuals with NCDs, as the nutritionist is essential as a health professional, due to his or her training. The nutritionist is able to identify nutritional risk factors that are the greatest indicators of chronic pre-diseases, being able to perform nutritional monitoring with the patient and assist in reversing the risk of NCDs with dietary prescription (Cassimiro and Santos, 2021).

Because prevention and treatment are mainly done through the improvement of eating habits, the importance of nutritional monitoring is of paramount necessity in the fight against the diseases in question. Diet therapy is one of the most essential factors in the prevention and control of these diseases, hence the need for nutritional follow-up in cases of NCDs or suspected (Rocha et al. 2021).

Due to the high rate of these diseases, and their high factor of aggravation to the health of the individual, these diseases are responsible for a more than exorbitant expenditure of money on health, causing an immense overload on the health system, delaying access to consultations and exams for many people. As noted by the author Maceda (2020), who says that the nutritionist is an essential investment, as he generates a positive return due to the primary care performed by him in patients, thus preventing and controlling the acquisition and aggravations of chronic non-communicable diseases, according to her:

The role of the nutritionist in this context is decisive in the prevention and approach to conditions such as overweight and obesity, DM, CVD and malnutrition, with positive effects in terms of improving the health status of users, also contributing to the reduction of health expenditure.

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this article is to show the importance of the nutritionist in the prevention and treatment of NCDs. Due to the high prevalence rates of these diseases and being a major detrimental factor to the quality of life of many individuals, it is capable of generating a high impact on public health, for these reasons the theme becomes very relevant for research. In addition, the research aims to point out what are the risk factors that can lead to the acquisition of these diseases, as well as to analyze why diet is the main factor for the prevalence and aggravation of NCDs, and finally, it seeks to debate the need for diet therapy as prevention and treatment of the diseases mentioned.

METHODOLOGY

For the elaboration of this work, the methodology of explanatory qualitative research was used, based on a bibliography search of complete articles, resolutions, laws and health data, carried out by students and professionals in the area of health, specifically in the area of nutrition, as well as publications



of the Republic and the Federal Council of Nutritionists (CFN). The data collected were based on research by other authors, thus being secondary data, and the time span was cross-sectional studies.

The study was carried out in the online environment of academic and informative research such as: Scielo, CFN, Ministry of Health (MS), United Nations (UN), World Health Organization (WHO). In total, 22 (twenty-two) documents, articles, laws and resolutions were used to foster the research, but 6 (six) were discarded due to lack of connection with the central theme. The keywords used in the research were: Importance of the nutritionist- Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases- Prevention and Treatment of NCDs.

DEVELOPMENT

The role of the nutritionist in the fight against Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases is essential since "the nutritionist is a professional who works in the promotion, prevention, and rehabilitation of health, through healthy eating practices" (Oliveira and Teixeira, 2023). Food is the basis for the prevention and treatment of various nutritional diseases, such as NCDs, and due to the private activities of the nutritionist, which are duly regulated by LAW No. 8,234, OF SEPTEMBER 17, 1991, it is the sole duty of the professional nutritionist to:

VII - nutritional assistance and education to groups or individuals, healthy or sick, in public and private institutions and in nutrition and dietetics offices; VIII - hospital, outpatient and medical and dietary consultations, prescribing, planning, analyzing, supervising and evaluating diets for the sick.

In this way, he is an irreplaceable professional in the fight against chronic non-communicable diseases.

Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) are characterized by a set of pathologies with multiple causes and risk factors, long latency periods, and prolonged course. In addition, they have a non-infectious origin and can result in functional disabilities (Silva and Lira, 2023).

NCDs are serious diseases and have a high aggravating rate if they are not cared for and treated correctly. As stated by the Ministry of Health (2021) "non-communicable diseases and diseases (NTD) are responsible for more than half of the total deaths in Brazil", making it the main public health issue in the country. There are social determinants and risk factors in the lives of individuals that favor the acquisition of chronic non-communicable diseases (Ministry of Health, 2021).

Risk factors for NCDs are diverse and include genetic, environmental, and behavioral factors. Among the main behavioral risk factors are a sedentary lifestyle, inadequate diet, smoking, and excessive alcohol consumption (Caldas et al. 2024).



The prevalence of these diseases must be immediately combated, and according to Malta et al. (2013) "knowledge of the distribution of risk and protective factors is essential to act on the health-disease process", thus, it is up to the nutritionist to be the professional trained to disseminate preventive information, due to his training that enables him to carry out Food and Nutrition Education (FNE) and for the evaluation, monitoring and nutritional care of the patient as regulated by CFN RESOLUTION No. 600, OF FEBRUARY 25, 2018.

Research on NCDs has increased, and since Resolution 53.17 of the World Health Assembly, which has encouraged agencies to combat the conditions that can lead to functional disabilities due to chronic non-communicable diseases, there is a latent concern about the topic (Malta et al. 2020). But despite the confrontation and increase in combat actions, NCD rates continue to be the main responsible for mortalities and functional disabilities, being 7 (seven) of the 10 (ten) main causes of mortality (United Nations, 2022).

Diet continues to be one of the major risk factors for NCDs, as the increase in the intake of processed and ultra-processed foods has increased considerably in the routine of most Brazilians, and its consumption favors excessive weight gain due to the high caloric density of foods, in addition to their excess of additives and form of processing. cause the food to have low nutritional value, further harming the individual's health (Silva et al. 2021).

Prevention can be accomplished by making better choices and moving away from risk factors, changing eating habits, and engaging in regular physical activity. This guidance on healthier habit choices should be provided by health professionals. In addition, when treatment should be applied, and no longer prevention, an even greater monitoring of the patient's health should be carried out.

As stated by Oliveira and Teixeira (2023) "adequate nutrition is a fundamental requirement for the promotion and protection of health, being a determining factor in the health of individuals and collectivities", thus, the need for adequate nutrition in the protection of health is further evidenced, still citing the authors, paraphrasing the CFN (2015), regarding the training of nutritionists in nutritional care, It says that he is "the only professional trained to develop strategies that involve food and nutritional care parameters, encompassing health promotion, disease prevention, treatment/care and assistance".

Culture and family lifestyle shape an individual's eating habits and improving them is an arduous and complex task, so it must be done by a professional. Many authors such as: Silva and Lira (2023), Bankoff, Bispo and Sousa (2020) and Maceda (2020) agree that Food and Nutrition Education (FNE) is a good strategy for the protection, prevention, treatment and quality of life of patients, so the nutritionist proves to be not only necessary, but also irreplaceable for the follow-up of patients with NCDs.

The author Maceda (2020), in addition to agreeing with the EAN, emphasizes that investing in the inclusion of nutritionists is consequently reducing public health expenditures, as NCDs are responsible for



the largest health expenditures. Therefore, the investment in nutritional monitoring that is carried out by the nutritionist, proves to be effective in reducing NCDs and due to the advancement of the fight against diseases, results in a significant reduction in their prevalence, a significant reduction in the number of cases in public health and "it is therefore increasingly important to show that the nutritional approach promotes, not only the reduction of health costs, but also health gains" (Maceda, 2020)

Diet therapy is essential in the prevention and treatment of chronic non-communicable diseases, and as it is a private activity of the nutritionist, this professional is more than essential in monitoring the individual's health. Rocha et al (2021), conducted a review study that shows how diet therapy using functional foods in the prevention and treatment of NCDs is effective. Among them: probiotics, prebiotics, nutraceuticals, bioactive substances, carotenoids, phenolic compounds and flavonoids.

The initial question of the research was the relationship between the consumption of functional foods and the prevention and treatment of chronic non-communicable diseases. The solution to the problem presented points out that the inclusion of functional foods in the diet can generate benefits in terms of the control and treatment of these diseases. The hypothesis was confirmed from data collection and analysis, where 49 published studies that establish this relationship were identified, in addition to the academic literature discussed in this research (Rocha et al. 2021).

Rocha et al. (2021), presented in their research the result of their data collection showing how the impact of varied foods combined with regular exercise improves quality of life and prevents NCDs and their aggravations. He also spoke about the importance of guidance from health professionals, "health professionals recommend a safe diet from a sanitary point of view, free of contamination, containing all nutrients of adequate quality and quantity" (Rocha et al. 2021).

Diet is a determining factor of health, and therefore the greatest to be considered as a risk to chronic non-communicable diseases, and according to Rocha et al. (2021) "functional foods generate benefits in the prevention and control of hypertension and heart disease", it was also found by this author that as prevention "studies have indicated that 30% to 40% of cancer cases in the world could be prevented through viable dietary measures", showing how diet therapy is effective in preventing NCDs. As a treatment, diet therapy also has positive responses, and it has been found that:

Bioactive compounds in functional foods are beneficial in the treatment of chronic diseases such as cancer, platelet aggregation, thrombosis, sexual dysfunction, arthritis, diabetes, obesity, stroke, and respiratory, cardiovascular, and neurodegenerative diseases. (Bianco, 2008), cited by Rocha et al (2021).

It is more than evident that the presence of the nutritionist in the prevention and treatment of NCDs guarantees positive results and that the applied diet therapy brings the quality of life that the disease compromises, and the work of the professional nutritionist is necessary in society to combat the prevalence of chronic non-communicable diseases. (Maceda 2020).



FINAL THOUGHTS

The research carried out and written in this article sought to emphasize the importance of the nutritionist in combating the prevalence of chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs), showing how their work is essential for the prevention and treatment of these diseases, since adequate nutrition is more than essential in preventive care and is indispensable in the treatment and quality of life of those affected by them. Based on reliable bibliographic research by several competent authors, it can be seen that the nutrition health professional is essential and irreplaceable in the care of patients with NCDs, and therefore, nutritional monitoring is essential.

It is concluded that the nutritionist, due to his training, training and private activities, specifically in dietary prescription, is the only professional who is authorized to perform specific nutritional care for the patient and aligned with a multidisciplinary team, the prevalence and aggravations of NCDs can be controlled and even considerably reduced. In addition, diet therapy has proven to be an effective way, being scientifically proven to combat NCDs, it must be performed by the professional nutritionist, and therefore, its performance in society as a fighter against chronic non-communicable diseases is irreplaceable and its value is undeniable.

Finally, we suggest more research that delves deeper into diet therapy and the nutritional approach, as it is a relevant topic for society and for public health, so more studies are needed to show the approach that should be taken to patients in vulnerable situations for NCDs, as well as those who have already acquired the disease and what are the functional foods that should be implemented in their diet.



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