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## **THE EUROPEAN 'FIGHT AGAINST MALNUTRITION' CAMPAIGN GAINS MOMENTUM**

### **Leading Nutrition and Health Groups Invest in Groundbreaking Research and Denmark's DAPEN<sup>1</sup> and NBH<sup>2</sup> Win a Prestigious Award for Innovation**

Professor Olle Ljungqvist, President of the European Society of Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism (ESPEN), and Co-chair of the European Nutrition for Health Alliance (ENHA) spoke to more than 1,200 delegates at the European 'Fight Against Malnutrition' Symposium during this year's 31<sup>st</sup> ESPEN Congress in Vienna. Professor Ljungqvist opened proceedings by stating that: "The 'Fight Against Malnutrition' is getting stronger day by day and real progress is being made to address the large but often hidden problem of malnutrition in Europe."

Professor Ljungqvist reminded the audience of some shocking statistics regarding the extent of malnutrition in Europe, specifically that 5% of the general population is malnourished and that in the elderly over 65 years this proportion rises to 15%. In hospitals malnutrition affects a staggering 40% of all patients and in care homes it is even higher at around 60%. Professor Ljungqvist added that "as many as 30 million Europeans (20 million in the European Union) could be malnourished and the health-related costs of this could be as high as €170 billion per year (€120 billion in the European Union)." In a call-to-action he concluded: "Malnutrition can be prevented and treated and we as nutrition experts have a mission to do something about malnutrition in hospitals, care homes and communities."

Changes in attitude and practice are driven by guidelines and to enhance these and focus greater attention towards malnutrition, Professor Ljungqvist announced two new annual ESPEN nutritional research grants. This year's grant winners were Dr Janet Baxter, representing the

ESPEN Home Artificial Nutrition special interest group, and Professor Berthold Koletzko of the Department of Paediatrics, Ludwig Maximilians University Clinic, Munich. Their research will seek to achieve a greater understanding of the quality-of-life implications for patients living at home on parenteral nutrition and the inadequately understood issue of malnutrition in hospitalised children, respectively. The ESPEN 'Nutrition Day' initiative has been successfully focussing attention on the issue of malnutrition in more than 30 countries worldwide. Professor Michael Hiesmayr described the large nutritional database, including information on 75,000 patients, that is now proving very useful in tracking outcomes following nutritional intervention. For example, the database has demonstrated an improvement in the percentage of 'patients eating all of their lunch' from 30-55% from 2006 to 2008.

Political action is making a real difference in tackling malnutrition in Europe and Frank de Man, General Secretary of the ENHA, updated the audience on the significant political progress to date. He highlighted the '**Prague Declaration of 2007**', the passing of EU resolutions urging a more holistic approach to nutrition (making malnutrition, alongside obesity, a key priority in the field of health for the years 2008-2013), and the '**STOP disease-related malnutrition and disease due to malnutrition**' declaration, signed in Prague in June 2009. Mr de Man concluded by outlining the ongoing action plan for addressing malnutrition in Europe, namely to: increase public awareness and attention; develop and implement nutritional guidelines; implement mandatory nutritional screening in hospitals; invest in malnutrition research; improve training in nutritional care; implement national nutritional care plans; ensure malnutrition is considered a public health issue by forthcoming EU presidencies.

To support innovation and the sharing of best practice John Ducker, Chairman of Medical Nutrition International Industry (MNI), presented the second MNI Award that recognises the most innovative national initiative to fight malnutrition and increase awareness of malnutrition. Mr Ducker presented the award of €30,000 to Dr Henrick Rasmussen who received it gratefully on behalf of the Danish Association of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (DAPEN) and the Danish National Board of Health (NBH). The award recognises the DAPEN and NBH initiative '**Fighting Malnutrition with a Multi-modal Strategic Approach**' that included the 'Better food for Patients' campaign, the implementation of NBH Nutritional Guidelines, the starting of 14 goal-oriented nutritional projects and nutrition accreditation in all Danish hospitals. Dr Rasmussen stated: "It is a great honour to receive this award on behalf of DAPEN and NBH". The key to this Danish success was a collaboration from the start between nutrition experts, healthcare providers & professionals, and politicians. The next 1-3 years of the Danish nutritional care plan

have been defined and will include, amongst other things, the systematic screening of five lifestyle risk factors (malnutrition, overweight, physical activity, smoking and alcohol).

Professor Ljungqvist closed the highly impactful symposium by stating “the DAPEN initiative is a fantastic example of what can be achieved when resources are gathered and aligned and urged all delegates to go home and get working in their community, care homes and hospitals to combat malnutrition”.

**1) Danish Association of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition**

**2) Danish National Board of Health**

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## **Resources and Notes to Editors**

### **About ESPEN**

ESPEN is dedicated to all issues relevant to the field of clinical nutrition and metabolism and encourages the rapid diffusion of knowledge and its application in the field of nutrition. The organisation promotes basic and clinical research, fosters high ethical standards of practice and investigation and promotes contact between investigators and clinicians in related fields.

[www.espen.org](http://www.espen.org)

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### **About ENHA**

The European Nutrition for Health Alliance unites European stakeholders to raise awareness, promote and preserve good health by providing evidence-based information about nutrition and metabolism to policy makers, as well as support implementation of nutritional care programmes.

[www.european-nutrition.org](http://www.european-nutrition.org)

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## **About MNI**

The Medical Nutrition International Industry (MNI) brings together companies providing products and services to optimise patient outcome through specialised nutritional solutions. It aims to build an environment which promotes the translation of clinical nutrition research into standard practice.

[www.mni-online.com](http://www.mni-online.com)

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