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Fourth year medical students' required patient care reflections in patients with advanced illness and complete functional assessment: Are they including nutritional status

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Recent surveys of US medical schools suggest the number of hours dedicated to nutrition continue to be inadequate. Our fourth year medical students take a required geriatrics clerkship under the supervision of our faculty and write separate patient summaries in each of three areas: Complete functional assessment, comprehensive medication review and advanced illness/palliative care. They are increasingly asked to comment on nutritional status and plan on their complete functional assessment and advanced illness/palliative care patient care assignments with recent emphasis in the syllabus. After graduation, consenting students had their written reports studied in research approved by the IRB of Florida State University. Research Question: We hypothesized that over three academic years all students would make more comments on their selected patient's nutritional status. 73 students comprised of three cohorts consented to have their assignments reviewed. These cohorts represented each of three academic years spanning 2013-2016. Assignments essentially represented 73 patients having a complete functional assessment and 73 patients with an advanced illness reflection by the students. Patients were of mean age 78 years. Almost half had cognitive impairment or dementia. Well over half were in a skilled nursing facility or assisted living facility. In the advanced illness patients, nutritional status was addressed by students in 52%, 39% and 56% of the cases with the greatest percentage in the most recent academic year. In the complete functional assessment, nutritional status was addressed by students in 13%, 24% and 50% of the cases with the greatest percentage in the most recent academic year.

Biography

John Ellis Agens has received his MD degree from Rutgers Medical School in 1986. He is board certified in Internal Medicine and Geriatrics. He began in solo Internal Medicine Practice in his hometown in New Jersey and then served 10 years as Geriatrician at Mayo Health System. In 2003, he has moved to Tallahassee, Florida as a Director of the Center for Chronic Care at Capital Health Plan while serving as Clinical Assistant Professor at Florida State University College of Medicine. In 2008, he became an Associate Professor and Geriatrics Clerkship Director for the required fourth year medical student experience..

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