

Perceived Barriers to Enteral Nutrition in Intensive Care: The Case of Kayseri/ Turkey

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Abstract

Background: Although evidence-based enteral nutrition (EN) protocols improve nutrient intake in critically ill patients, it is known that many patients still fail to meet their energy requirements due to barriers to enteral nutrition and remain at risk of malnutrition.

Aim: Therefore, this study aimed to identify the problems faced by healthcare professionals in the implementation of nutritional support practices in ICUs.

Method: This cross-sectional study included 225 healthcare professionals (32 dietitians, 32 physicians, 161 nurses) from ten ICUs. Data were collected using the Turkish-adapted "Barriers to Feeding Critically Ill Patients (BEFIP)" questionnaire, assessing 28 items on guideline adherence, ICU resources, dietitian support, patient feeding, and staff attitudes. Responses were rated on a 7-point Likert scale, with higher scores reflecting greater perceived barriers.

Results: Overall, doctors reported the highest total barriers score (30.41 ± 15.16), followed by dietitians (29.34 ± 18.23) and nurses (27.98 ± 20.46) ($p=0.615$). Subscale analysis showed doctors perceived more barriers in ICU resources and patient feeding, dietitians scored highest on staff attitudes, and nurses slightly scored higher on guideline adherence. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that addressing these barriers through improving guideline adherence, strengthening resources, enhancing dietitian support, and providing staff training may improve the effectiveness of nutritional support and patient outcomes.