

# Clinical Nutrition Highlights

## eNewsletter



### Resources for nutritional management of patients with COVID-19

#### INTRODUCTION

The world is currently facing a pandemic of a new coronavirus commonly known as COVID-19. It is now evident that **older people are amongst the most vulnerable population with a mortality rate of approximately 15%**<sup>1</sup>.

A recent guidance document from the World Health Organization (WHO) reports **older age is a risk factor for increased mortality in those affected by COVID-19**. Other risk factors are age-related clinical conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, cerebrovascular disease, cancer and chronic lung disease. Older people affected by these conditions are potentially at the highest risk for fatality, and those with frailty are one of the most vulnerable populations<sup>2</sup>.

**Physiological changes with age lead to declines in intrinsic capacity such as malnutrition, cognitive decline, and depressive symptoms which warrant an integrated approach to the screening, assessment and management of older people**<sup>2</sup>.



#### AIM

- To offer a structured compilation of relevant **guidelines and recommendations** on COVID-19 published by **geriatric associations and special interest groups**.
- To help identify the key **information hubs** focused on the special concerns of **older adults** regarding COVID-19.

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#### 1 PUBLISHED GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS PUBLISHED BY GERIATRIC ASSOCIATIONS AND SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

##### COVID-19 and Older People in Asia: Asian Working Group for Sarcopenia Calls to Actions

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has casted a huge impact on global public health and the economy. In this challenging situation, older people are vulnerable to the infection and the secondary effects of the pandemic and need special attention. To evaluate the impacts of COVID-19 on older people, it is important to balance the successful pandemic control and active management of secondary consequences. These considerations are particularly salient in the Asian context, with its diversity among countries in terms of sociocultural heritage, healthcare setup and availability of resources. Thus, the Asian Working Group for Sarcopenia summarized the considerations of Asian countries focusing on responses and difficulties in each country, impacts of health inequity related to the COVID-19 pandemic and proposed recommendations for older people, which are germane to the Asian context. More innovative services should be developed to address the increasing demands for new approaches to deliver healthcare in these difficult times and to establish resilient healthcare systems for older people.

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##### Prevention of COVID-19 in Older Adults: A Brief Guidance from the International Association for Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG) Asia/Oceania Region

Based upon various preventive strategies being implemented in the region, the mnemonic COVID-IAGG-AO was proposed as basic guidance to prevent COVID-19 in older adults. The COVID-IAGG-AO guidance covers broad areas that promote the well-being of older people, namely:

- Prevention of COVID-19 infection through safe distancing and personal hygiene.
- Enhancing physical resilience through proper sleep, adequate nutrition, and exercise and preventing frailty. Getting enough sunlight to obtain vitamin D may reduce the risk of infection in older adults with suboptimal levels of vitamin D.
- Promoting mental resilience by being optimistic and increasing social interaction and support networks through appropriate use of user-friendly technology for communication. In the era of social media where 'fake news' can be rampant, obtaining specific up-to-date and accurate information of the local outbreak situation and related health news was associated with a lower psychological impact of the outbreak and lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. In settings where the level of digital literacy is low, traditional media such as television and radio can still play a critical role in the multi-pronged strategy for public health messaging and helping older people stay connected.
- Ensuring access to emergency services, medications and food supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Measures at the systems level to ensure medication access include prevention of stockpiling and drug shortages, as well as expanding capacity for online medication refill and home delivery; incentives should be provided for pharmacies, particularly independent stores located in underserved areas, to offer home delivery services at no cost.

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##### Israel Ad Hoc COVID-19 Committee: Guidelines for Care of Older Persons During a Pandemic

Early on, geriatricians in Israel viewed with increasing alarm the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). It was clear that this viral disease exhibited a clear predilection for and danger to older persons. Informal contacts began with senior officials from the country's Ministry of Health, the Israel Medical Association, and the country's largest health fund; this was done to plan an approach to the possible coming storm. A group was formed, comprising three senior geriatricians, a former dean, a palliative care specialist, and a lawyer/ethicist. The members made every effort to ensure that their recommendations would be practical while at the same time taking into account the tenets of medical ethics. The committee's main task was to think through a workable approach because intensive care unit/ventilator resources may be far outstripped by those requiring such care. Recommendations included the approach to older persons both in the community and in long-term care institutions, a triage instrument, and palliative care. Patient autonomy was emphasized, with a strong recommendation for people of all ages to update their advance directives or, if they did not have any, to quickly draw them up. Considering the value of distributive justice, with respect to triage, a "soft utilitarian" approach was advocated with the main criteria being function and comorbidity. Although chronological age was rejected as a sole criterion, in the case of an overwhelming crisis, "biological age" would enter into the triage considerations, but only in the case of distinguishing between people with equal non-age-related deficits. The guideline emphasized that no matter what, in the spirit of beneficence (and understanding basic needs of older people who are at home such as food and medications), anyone who fell ill must receive active palliative care throughout the course of a COVID-19 infection but especially at the end of life. Furthermore, in the spirit of nonmaleficence, the frail, very old, and severely demented would be actively protected from dying on ventilation.

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##### AGS Position Statement: Resource Allocation Strategies and Age-Related Considerations in the COVID-19 Era and Beyond

This statement represents the official policy position of the American Geriatrics Society (AGS). The statement includes recommendations that should be immediately implemented to address resource allocation strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic, aligning with AGS positions. The statement also includes recommendations for post-pandemic review: to ensure that governments and institutions have equitable emergency resource allocation strategies, avoid future discriminatory language and practice, and have appropriate guidance to develop national frameworks for emergent resource allocation decisions.

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##### Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Nursing Homes

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is providing guidance to nursing homes to help them improve their infection control and practices to prevent the transmission of COVID-19, including revised guidance for visitation.

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##### International COVID-19 Palliative Care Guidance for Nursing Homes Leaves Key Themes Unaddressed

The objective of this publication is to inform the development of new guidelines by examining existing national and international COVID-19 guidance documents for nursing homes concerning palliative and/or end-of-life care, and the specific recommendations they make.

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##### The COVID-19 Pandemic and Physical Activity

The journal of Sports Medicine and Health Science Editor-in-Chiefs and the Editorial Board offer physical activity guidelines to individuals suffering from adverse outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic and those recovering from an infection. The constellation of changes in cellular and physiological function that accompany the aging process make older people especially vulnerable to COVID-19. A brief description of the mechanisms through which SARS-CoV-2 infection might contribute to the development or progression of frailty and sarcopenia in older ages is reviewed.

[See Publication](#)

##### Recommendations for Physical Inactivity and Sedentary Behavior During the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic

While recognizing the importance of confinement policies set up to contain COVID-19 pandemic, home-based programs are firmly recommended to address the physical inactivity and sedentary behavior as a critical preventative health strategy during the current lockdown. WHO just released guidance intended for people in self-quarantine without any symptoms or diagnosis of acute respiratory illness, containing a set of practical advice on how to stay active and reduce sedentary behavior while at home.

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#### 2 INFORMATION HUBS

##### COVID-19 : Resources for Care for Older Persons. World Health Organization (WHO)

A compilation of resources such as guidance documents, and Q&As in the context of COVID-19. Content is suited for those who manage the care of older adults.

[See Publication](#)

##### COVID-19 Guidance for Older Adults. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

A compilation of resources such as guidance documents, a care plan form, videos, digital information, and other relevant links. Content is suited for the public, including older adults.

[See Publication](#)

##### AMDA Update on COVID-19. Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Medicine (AMDA)

A compilation of AMDA guidance. Resources, and tools, including podcasts, webinars, news briefs, and other relevant links. Content is suited for those affiliated with post-acute and long-term care facilities.

[See Publication](#)

##### AGS Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Information Hub. American Geriatrics Society (AGS)

A compilation of resources such as guidance documents, policy statements, publications, and toolkits for clinicians, as well as other relevant links. Content is offered both for health care practitioners, and older adults and their caregivers.

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Older adults and caregivers are directed to information posted on the AGS Health in Aging website.

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##### Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Information Hub

A compilation of resources such as guidance documents, and Q&As in the context of COVID-19. Content is suited for those who manage the care of older adults.

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#### REFERENCES

1. Chhetri JK, Chan P, Arai H, et al. Prevention of COVID-19 in Older Adults: A Brief Guidance from the International Association for Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG) Asia/Oceania region. *J Nutr Health Aging*. 2020;24(5):471-472. doi:10.1007/s12603-020-1359-7.

2. World Health Organization. Clinical management of COVID-19. 2020. WHO reference number: WHO/2019-nCoV/clinical/2020.5.

