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Nutrition linked to longer survival in cancer patients

Research conducted by nutrition expert, Dr Judy Bauer, has shown that better nutrition can increase quality of life for some cancer patients.

Dr Bauer's research, funded by The Wesley Research Institute in Brisbane, has shown that cancer patients benefit from individually tailored nutrition programs.

Dr Bauer said the incidence of malnutrition in cancer sufferers had been estimated at up to 80 per cent with suggestions that as many patients die from the wasting associated with cancer as from the cancer itself.

"Cancer cachexia or wasting is very common in patients with cancer which makes them weak and affects their treatment and recovery," Dr Bauer said.

"Our research has shown that patients who have intensive nutrition intervention tolerate treatment better, have more energy and experience shorter hospital stays, better wound healing and fewer complications.

"Over a period of time this leads to better recovery and quality of life, and longer survival.

"For a patient with terminal cancer, being in better health and having extra time to spend with loved ones is precious."

Dr Bauer said she hoped her research would help establish dietitian consultations as standard practice for patients with cancer in hospitals and encourage more hospitals to establish specialised nutrition outpatient clinics for cancer patients.

"At the moment, not all patients with cancer receive appropriate dietary advice but we have demonstrated that a series of intensive nutrition consultations with a dietitian can have a significant impact on patient outcomes.

"Prescribing the food, liquids and supplements that will benefit patients most from the very start of their treatment may prevent their condition deteriorating while follow-up and outpatient treatment is vital for maintaining their health, wellbeing and quality of life beyond their hospital stay."

Dr Bauer has been given additional funding through The Wesley Research Institute and the Queensland Government's Smart State Health and Medical Research Fund to study the effects of nutrition in patients with gynecological cancer.

"The Wesley Research Institute is unique because it focuses on research which improves patient care and the quality of patients' lives through better diagnosis and improved treatment," Dr Bauer said.

"By funding practical, patient and outcomes-focused research the Institute finds new ways to immediately improve diagnosis and treatment, and help reduce the often debilitating and painful side effects of illness and disease which can so profoundly affect patients' quality of life."

The Wesley Research Institute funds and supports doctors, nurses and allied health professionals to conduct medical research across a broad range of areas.

For more information please contact 07 3232 7264.