

IDA

iowa dietetic association

"YOUR LINK TO NUTRITION & HEALTH" SM

September 24, 2007

Sherry James
Iowa Department of Elder Affairs
510 East 12th Street, Suite 2
Des Moines, IA 50319-9025

Dear Ms. James,

As President of the Iowa Dietetic Association, I am writing to encourage you to include nutritional care in the services provided to Alzheimer's patients. The registered dietitian is the trained nutritional professional that can identify malnutrition and dehydration in this population and develop nutritional care plans to address the individuals needs.

Nutrition management of the person with Alzheimer's/dementia is challenging and ever changing. By focusing on adequate nutritional intakes one can decrease health care costs and increase health outcomes. Without proper nutrition this population is susceptible to increased risk of infection, respiratory problems, skin breakdown with ulceration, poor wound healing, weakness and poor mobility and impaired cardiac function. Nutrition approaches may also be used to calm the patient with dementia. Minimizing mealtime confusion, offering finger foods, providing only the needed utensil are a few of the strategies that have been found to be successful.

The registered dietitian is the health professional trained to address the person's eating skills including chewing and swallowing, interest in food, and attention span; provide the resources needed to support feeding; assess the potential need for nutrition support. Please consider including nutritional care services by a registered dietitian in the services provided to the Alzheimer's /dementia population. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Heidi Petersen MS, RD, LD
President Iowa Dietetic Association