Reviewer’s report

Title: A comprehensive assessment of enteral nutrition practices and nutritional provision in children during the entire length of stay in critical care

Version: 1 Date: 19 April 2014

Reviewer: John William Lambert Puntis

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This paper is an audit of nutritional intakes achieved in a paediatric intensive care unit. The aim was to establish how often adequate nutritional intake was not achieved and those factors that compromised the meeting of nutritional targets. Fasting, the need for fluid restriction, and stepwise introduction of enteral nutrition were the most common reasons why energy requirements were not met. As the authors state, previous studies have also highlighted these same factors as the primary reasons for failing to meeting nutritional goals in ICU settings.

Discretionary revisions

1. I would suggest that another reason for failing to meet nutritional targets is a reluctance to use parenteral nutrition in conjunction with enteral feeding despite that fact that the fluid restriction precludes optimal enteral nutrient supply. On the basis of the evidence presented in this audit, it would appear that the single intervention most likely to improve nutrient intake would be use of early PN while establishing enteral feeding. This seems to be regarded as heresy in the ICU world, and while implicitly conceding the point in line 251, the authors cannot bring themselves to name this specific “possible resource”! Could they commit themselves here?

2. Multidisciplinary team management is alluded to (line 208) but no details given of what this means in this particular PICU (joints wards rounds; telephone advice; etc.), and whether, for example, there are agreed nutritional support protocols. Is there any scope for improvements in MDT working to achieve better nutritional intakes (e.g. a prescribing pharmacist for PN)?

3. Minor comments
Line 120: a priory = a priori
Line 124: ‘PIM2 score’ should be explained
Tables: ‘n’ for ‘number’ conventionally lower case

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests