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Title: Pilot of an Outpatient (OP) Nasogastric Feeding (NGF) Pathway for Head & Neck Cancer (HNC) Patients receiving Radiotherapy Treatment (RT) in Cork University Hospital (CUH)

Body: Background: Patients with HNC can develop significant nutritional issues during RT requiring timely nutrition support. This study aimed to assess the feasibility of an outpatient NGF pathway, provide earlier NGF, minimize weight loss, improve patient experience (PE) and quality of life (QoL).

Methods: 5 patients completed the pilot between July 2023 and October 2024. An audit of 6 inpatients (IP) admitted to CUH for NGF during RT in 2022 provided comparison data. 5 OPs completed the EORTC QLQ-C30 and 5 OPs/3 IPs completed the patient satisfaction questionnaire.

Results: The pilot demonstrated earlier NGF (OP 24.4hrs vs IP 57.3hrs) with less weight loss at tube insertion (OP 8.8% vs IP 14%). Duration of NGF was longer (42.2days vs 11.5days) but mean weight loss during RT was lower (8.8% vs 14.2%). The cost of NGF was higher for IPs vs OPs (€74,451 vs €397). 100% OP showed increased HR-QoL scores after NGF. 100% OP vs 66% IP were satisfied/very satisfied with the overall dietetic service.

Conclusion: The pilot pathway was feasible, cost effective and improved patient satisfaction/QoL.

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