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Conjoint Professor Anne Duggan
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care
agedcarestandards@safetyandquality.gov.au

Dear Professor Duggan

Re – Consultation on draft Australian Falls Guidelines on Preventing Falls and Harm from Falls in Older People

The Maggie Beer Foundation welcomes the draft Australian Falls Guidelines on Preventing Falls and Harm from Falls in Older People, and particularly the address across three relevant settings -

- Falls Guidelines for Residential Aged Care Services (RACS)
- Falls Guidelines for Community Care
- Falls Guidelines for Hospitals.

Of enormous importance in supporting older people through preventing falls, and in reducing impact and aiding recovery, is nutrition.

On the basis of evidence, we think that the guidelines could and should go further and the reference to nutrition should be much more explicit if we are to prevent falls in all three settings. Consideration should be given to renaming “15 Vitamin D and Calcium” as “15 Food and Nutrition”.

While older people and those who care for them increasingly see exercise as an essential part of ageing well and avoiding falls, the place of good food and proper nutrition is not well understood. We need to do much more to explain the importance of food as we age, particularly in the face of cost of living pressures which may cause our older households to put a low priority on fresh, good food.

We draw your attention to the seminal work of Dr Sandra Iuliano¹ and colleagues. There is compelling evidence about the central place of protein - and dairy protein in particular – but this does not yet seem to be widely understood as an ongoing dietary requirement as we age. Elsewhere descriptions of the “anorexia of ageing”² and the value of nutrition interventions³ for older people support this priority. Good nutrition includes calcium, vitamin D, protein, iron (to reduce the risk of

¹ S Iuliano, S Poon, J Robbins, M Bui, X Wang, L De Groot, M Van Loan, A Ghasem Zadeh, T Nguyen, E Seeman, Effect of dietary sources of calcium and protein on hip fractures and falls in older adults in residential care: cluster randomised controlled trial, *BMJ* 2021: 375:n2364 doi: 10.1136/bmj.n2364

² For example, https://researchnow-admin.flinders.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/76540712/Han_Individualized_P2023.pdf

³ https://researchnow-admin.flinders.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/76540712/Han_Individualized_P2023.pdf

anaemia) and energy.⁴ And of course food which is enjoyed, is flavourful and accompanied by opportunities for hydration make it much more likely that the older person enjoys the required level of nutrition to prevent falls.

The Guidelines can assist a better emphasis on food across all three settings, and not just as a periodic supplement but as part of regular diet. Good food must be understood as an essential element of falls prevention and of an aged care or health service.

Congratulations on the draft guidelines and thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely



Maggie Beer
Founder and Director



Jane Mussared
Chief Executive Officer

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<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6372028/#:~:text=Malnutrition%20and%20dehydration%20symptoms%20include,falls%20and%20possibly%20injurious%20falls.>

About the Maggie Beer Foundation

The Maggie Beer Foundation is determined to improve the food experience and quality of life for current and future generations of older people.

For more than 10 years, the Foundation has been advocating, educating, collaborating, facilitating research and sharing the latest knowledge and skills with cooks and chefs in aged care. We do this through our online education modules, our professional hands-on Trainer Mentor Chef Programs, our moderation of a professional community for aged care cooks and chefs, and our contribution to research and policy development.

We are equally committed to working with others to better understand and address the very real risk of malnutrition among older people living in their own homes, including those who live alone, and who, for a range of reasons, face barriers to enjoying healthy, delicious food.

We can bring about life-altering change to the well-being of older people through access to food full of flavour and nutrients.

As Maggie says,

“Food is the fuel of life, of great conversation and memorable meals. Its substance is far more than just the nutrients acquired in the act of eating. It’s the knowledge of loving preparation, the anticipation of sharing a meal and the delicious pleasure of engaging all our senses as we eat. Food is nutrition not just for the body, but also for the soul. It’s what fires our appetite for life, no matter what age. Every mouthful counts as we age, and the Foundation’s resources and reach aspire to work every day to make good food and good eating the reality for each and every older Australian.”

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