Campaign launched to end malnutrition in hospital

**Charity Age UK urges nurses to make mealtimes a priority following disappointing findings of a survey**

By Erin Dean and Lisa Berry

NURSES ARE being urged to screen all older patients at risk of malnutrition on admission to hospital and throughout their stay.

The charity Age UK found that increasing numbers of patients are leaving hospital malnourished. A survey of 1,000 nurses, conducted by the charity, found that fewer than half of hospitals screen older people for malnutrition on admission to hospital and one third of wards screen patients during their stay.

The findings led to the launch of the charity’s Still Hungry to be Heard campaign, urging nurses to make mealtimes a priority.

Age UK, formed by the merger of Age Concern and Help the Aged, claims the problem has become worse since Age Concern’s Hungry to be Heard campaign in 2006.

The charity’s malnutrition report published in September says 185,000 patients left hospital malnourished in 2008/09, while 239 people died of starvation in 2007 during their hospital stay.

The new Age UK campaign recommends seven steps to end hospital malnutrition, including the introduction of protected mealtimes. It wants the recording of malnutrition rates to become compulsory.

More people are also entering hospital malnourished, according to the report. In 2007/08, 148,000 entered hospital malnourished; this figure rose to 175,000 in 2008/09.

National Nurses Nutrition Group (NNNG) chair Liz Evans said: ‘Strategies should be put in place in primary care to tackle the problem of malnutrition before it reaches the levels we have seen in hospitalised patients. The NNNG would like to see a partnership approach between primary, secondary and social care agencies in tackling malnutrition in any group that needs support.’

**Join the debate online**

Is the nutrition of older people being addressed in your workplace? Share your views on the issue at www.nursingolderpeople.co.uk

**A life captured on film**

FORMER PSYCHIATRIC nurse Zarreen Jahanpour is starring in a documentary charting her experience of dementia.

The film, Remember Me, will also feature her daughter Taranah (pictured). It is being made by Nudge Productions, of which Taranah is a director. Zarreen and Taranah live in Gorleston, Norfolk, and the film is supported by Norfolk and Waveney Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust.

‘It is going to be an education tool,’ Taranah said. ‘It’s not about facts and figures, more about the experience of living with dementia and showing that people can still have a quality of life.’

Zarreen said she hopes it will help other people with dementia.

Remember Me is expected to be finished by the beginning of 2011 and will be available through the mental health trust.