

**NUTRITIONAL ASSESSMENT AND VENOUS LEG ULCERS HEALING TIME IN THE ELDERLY**

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**Aim:** To assess the relationship of nutritional status in elderly patients suffering of venous leg ulceration and healing time length.

**Method:** A nutritional assessment of 30 ambulatory patients with venous leg ulcer cared in a community health centre was made, using the Body Mass Index (BMI), triceps skinfold thickness (TSF), mid-arm circumference (MAC), mid-arm muscle circumference (MAMC), Mini Nutritional Assessment (MNA) and a Food Frequency Questionnaire (FFQ), and correlated with healing time length.

**Results:** According with specific BMI for the elderly, we have found that 36.7% were undernourished, increased with age in women ( $p < 0.05$ ). Assessment with MNA revealed that 26.7% were in malnutrition risk. Correlation was significant between BMI, MNA and muscular compartment anthropometric parameters: MAC, MAMC ( $p < 0.05$ ). We have observed that the dietary intake decreases progressively, in a significant way, with age ( $p < 0.05$ ). Micronutrients intake (vitamins A, B6, K, pantothenic acid and zinc) were below the recommended values. An inverse correlation between leg ulcer healing time length and nutritional status, was found, as with the intake of some nutrients (protein, carbohydrate, riboflavin, pantothenic acid and vitamins A, B6 and K, copper, iron, manganese and zinc;  $p < 0,05$ ).

**Discussion:** This study demonstrates that nutritional status and dietary intake in the elderly have a significant correlation, in a negative way, with leg ulcers healing time length. In this population the nutritional assessment using MNA, seems to be the most sensitive method to predict healing. We could suggest that improving nutritional status could contribute to reduce venous leg ulcer healing time in the elderly.