



Nutritional Screening in Mental Health Settings

Why do we use the St Andrews Nutritional screening instrument (SANSI) rather than the Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool (MUST)?

Although the MUST screening tool is the current recommended tool to be used in healthcare settings in the UK for adults, Dietitians working in Mental Health, Brain injury and Neurology have long recognised that the tool significantly underreports nutrition related risk in our patient group.

The MUST tool focuses on undernutrition and acute illness rather than key risk factors relevant to our patients. It is also not suitable for use in adolescents. In response to these concerns, in 2009 the dietetic team at St Andrews developed a modified tool which captures these risks including dysphagia, the need for tube feeding, special dietary requirements, selective eating, food/fluid refusal and obesity. We also ensured it would be suitable to use in adolescent services.

We conducted some research to validate this tool; the reference and abstract can be found below. The published paper focuses on the adult inpatient secure psychiatric setting, however, St Andrews has a large cohort of patient with brain injury and neurological conditions and the research was conducted across all services including the CAMHS services. This research confirmed that SANSI captures risks that MUST misses in our patient groups. The tool has been adopted by other organisations including some from overseas and shared with members of the specialist mental health group of the British Dietetic Association.

How is SANSI different to MUST?

Step 1 and 2 is similar to MUST- confirm current weight, BMI and any weight changes. Step 3 is no longer acute disease effect but a series of questions to highlight risks. A score is not obtained as the tool is aimed at generating an action plan which is more useful. SANSI has reference tables to allow adjustment of BMI ranges for patients aged 12-18.

How often should SANSI be completed?

Nutritional screening should occur in all healthcare settings and at St Andrew's this is a monthly process. This can be completed by any of the nursing staff or MDT.

Online resources

Please visit our website and click on the links to the latest version of the SANSI tool, training slides and factsheet;

<https://www.stah.org/careers/dietetics>

References;

[J Psychiatr Ment Health Nurs](#). 2012 Oct;19(8):722-8. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2850.2011.01848.x. Epub 2012 Jan 10.

Identification of nutritional risk by nursing staff in secure psychiatric settings: reliability and validity of St Andrew's Nutrition Screening Instrument.

[Rowell A1](#), [Long C](#), [Chance L](#), [Dolley O](#).

Abstract

Nutrition screening is the first-line approach to addressing the nutritional needs of service users and has been recommended as best practice by several authoritative and regulatory bodies. A simple and comprehensive screening tool, the St Andrew's Nutrition Screening Instrument (SANSI), was developed for use in an inpatient secure psychiatric setting. The aim of this study was to test the screening tool for reliability and validity. This study identified SANSI as reliable and valid for use in secure psychiatric settings for adolescents and adults. This should give confidence to regulatory and commissioning organizations, that the nutritional risk for patients in an organization which serves a diverse mental health population is being correctly identified, raising staff awareness and allowing appropriate action to be planned.