

DIETITIAN RECOGNITION AWARD WINNER:
MS ISOBEL CONNOLLY



PROJECT: The Establishment of a Dietetic-Led Clinic for the Management of Paediatric Patients with Coeliac Disease and Evaluation of the Service Pre and Post Change to the Clinic Structure.

'I am delighted to win the Dr Falk- Guts UK Dietitian Prize. It is an acknowledgement of the long hours of work that I have put into this project. Being involved in this process has helped me to commit to a continued role in service improvement and research alongside my clinical work, and work towards a MSc in Paediatric Dietetics.'

Ms Isobel Connolly is an Advanced Dietitian in Paediatric Gastroenterology at St George's Hospital, London.

'Coeliac disease (CD) is a condition that is managed solely through a gluten free diet, with dietitians instrumental in providing patient follow-up. Supporting evidence for a paediatric dietetic led clinic includes a UK based study which reported that satisfaction with annual follow up with a dietitian only, was high and similar to that of a service with annual gastroenterologist and dietitian follow-up (Ross et al.,2013).

'The two aims of my project were firstly to provide CD paediatric patients (and their parents) with the opportunity to provide feedback on the current service and to use this feedback constructively, to improve the service.

'Secondly, we wanted to establish a streamlined service for paediatric patients by changing the management of their condition to a minimum of one clinic appointment per year with the gastroenterology dietitian, with the opportunity to refer them to a paediatric gastroenterologist only if required.

'The research fits with one of the NICE research objectives: exploring how to maximise the effectiveness of the dietitian's role in helping people with CD to adhere to a GFD. It also adheres to one of the research priorities identified by Coeliac UK at the annual research conference, which is to 'Find the best post diagnosis support' for patients with CD.

'The service evaluation, currently ongoing, is composed of two parameters; the first is a patient and parent satisfaction survey (a repeat of the same survey sent when patients with CD were reviewed annually by both the dietitian and the gastroenterologist). The second parameter is the rate of compliance, as assessed by a questionnaire and biochemical results. NICE and BSPGHAN guidelines advise that assessing and ensuring compliance with the GFD is one of the principal reasons that patients with CD are followed up.

'The anticipated result is that there will be similar satisfaction rates with the dietetic-led clinic as there is with gastroenterologist and dietitian follow-up.'

Ms Connolly's Line Manager, Principle Paediatric Dietitian Nicole Dos Santos comments:

'Isobel has been involved in the establishment of a London paediatric gastroenterology dietitian's group, which has met to share both experience in complex cases and resources for the management of complex cases.

'In addition, as part of her role as a paediatric gastroenterology dietitian, Isobel has also established a dietetic led service for the management of Coeliac Disease in St George's Hospital. This service has improved patient care significantly by increasing patient access to follow up and decreasing the number of appointments patients require, improving patient attendance and also streamlining dietetic review with blood monitoring.'

