

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Cross-Sectional Evaluation of Nutritional Status and Its Impact on Diabetic Foot Ulcer Healing in a Surgical Population

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ABSTRACT

Background: Diabetic foot ulcers (DFUs) represent a major complication of diabetes mellitus, significantly impacting patients' quality of life and healthcare systems worldwide. Nutritional status has been identified as a crucial factor influencing wound healing in DFUs, yet its role in a surgical population remains underexplored. **Methods:** This cross-sectional study evaluated the nutritional status of 200 surgical patients with DFUs and assessed its impact on wound healing. We employed various nutritional assessment tools, including body mass index (BMI), serum albumin levels, and dietary intake analysis, to determine patients' nutritional status. The relationship between nutritional status and ulcer healing was examined through wound assessment scores over a specified period. **Results:** Preliminary findings indicate a significant correlation between poor nutritional status and delayed DFU healing. Patients with malnutrition exhibited slower wound healing rates compared to well-nourished individuals. **Conclusions:** Enhancing nutritional support in surgical patients with DFUs could improve wound healing outcomes. These findings underscore the need for integrated nutritional assessments and interventions as part of the comprehensive management of DFUs in surgical populations.

Keywords: Diabetic Foot Ulcers, Nutritional Status, Wound Healing.

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INTRODUCTION

Diabetic foot ulcers (DFUs) are a common and severe complication of diabetes mellitus, affecting approximately 15% of diabetic patients during their lifetime. These ulcers can lead to significant morbidity, including infection, hospitalization, and even lower extremity amputation, thereby increasing mortality risk and healthcare costs. The pathophysiology of DFUs involves a complex interplay of factors, including neuropathy, peripheral arterial disease, and immunosuppression, complicating their management and healing processes.[1][2] Nutritional status plays a pivotal role in wound healing, with malnutrition being associated with impaired healing, increased infection rates, and prolonged hospital stays. Nutrients such as proteins, vitamins, and minerals are essential for the various stages of wound healing, including inflammation, proliferation, and remodeling. Despite the known impact of nutrition on wound healing, there is a scarcity of research focusing on the nutritional

assessment of diabetic patients with foot ulcers, particularly in a surgical setting.[3][4]

AIM

To assess the impact of nutritional status on diabetic foot ulcer healing in a surgical population.

OBJECTIVES

- To evaluate the nutritional status of surgical patients with diabetic foot ulcers using various assessment tools.
- To investigate the correlation between nutritional status and wound healing rates in these patients.
- To identify potential nutritional interventions that could improve wound healing outcomes in this population.

MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

Source of Data: Patients were admitted to the surgical department with diabetic foot ulcers.

Study Design: A cross-sectional observational study was conducted.

Sample Size: The study included 200 patients.

Inclusion Criteria: Diabetic patients aged 18 and above with active foot ulcers that required surgical intervention were included.

Exclusion Criteria: Patients with non-diabetic ulcers, those who were unwilling to participate, and patients with conditions affecting nutritional status assessment (e.g., thyroid disorders, renal failure) were excluded.

Study Methodology: Nutritional status was assessed using BMI, serum albumin levels, and dietary intake analysis. Wound healing was evaluated through standardized wound assessment scores.

Statistical Analysis Methods: Descriptive statistics summarized demographic and clinical characteristics. Correlation and regression analyses explored the relationship between nutritional status and wound healing rates.

Data Collection: Data were collected through patient interviews, medical record review, and laboratory tests.

OBSERVATION AND RESULTS

Table 1: Impact of Nutritional Status on Diabetic Foot Ulcer Healing

Nutritional Status	Number of Patients (n=200)	%	Odds Ratio (OR)	95% Confidence Interval (CI)	P-value
Well-nourished	120	60	1 (reference)	—	—
Moderately malnourished	50	25	2.0	1.2-3.3	0.007
Severely malnourished	30	15	3.5	1.8-6.7	0.001

Table 1 reveals the impact of nutritional status on the healing of diabetic foot ulcers among 200 patients. The data indicate that 60% (120 patients) were well-nourished, 25% (50 patients) were moderately malnourished, and 15% (30 patients) were severely malnourished. The odds ratios (OR) suggest that moderately malnourished patients had twice the odds of delayed healing compared to well-nourished patients, and this risk increased to 3.5 times for severely malnourished patients. The significant p-values (0.007 for moderately malnourished and 0.001 for severely malnourished) underscore the importance of nutritional status in the healing process.

Table 2: Evaluation of Nutritional Status Using Various Assessment Tools

Assessment Tool	Well-nourished n(%)	Moderately malnourished n(%)	Severely malnourished n(%)
BMI	100 (50)	40 (20)	60 (30)
Serum Albumin Levels	110 (55)	45 (22.5)	45 (22.5)
Dietary Intake Analysis	120 (60)	35 (17.5)	45 (22.5)

Table 2 evaluates the nutritional status of these patients using three different assessment tools: Body Mass Index (BMI), serum albumin levels, and dietary intake analysis. The assessment showed that 50% of patients were well-nourished according to BMI, 55% according to serum albumin levels, and 60% as per dietary intake analysis. This table highlights the variance in nutritional status identification depending on the assessment tool used, with a notable portion of patients classified as moderately to severely malnourished.

Table 3: Correlation Between Nutritional Status and Wound Healing Rates

Nutritional Status	Average Healing Time (weeks)	% Healing within 12 Weeks	Odds Ratio (OR)	95% CI	P-value
Well-nourished	8	95	1 (reference)	—	—
Moderately malnourished	10	75	0.4	0.2-0.8	0.005
Severely malnourished	14	50	0.1	0.05-0.2	<0.001

Table 3 focuses on the correlation between nutritional status and wound healing rates. Well-nourished patients had an average healing time of 8 weeks, with 95% healing within 12 weeks. Conversely, moderately malnourished patients took an average of 10 weeks to heal, with 75% healing within the 12-week mark, while severely malnourished patients had a prolonged healing time of 14 weeks, with only 50% healing within the same period. The odds ratios significantly favored well-nourished patients over malnourished ones, indicating a robust relationship between better nutritional status and faster wound healing.

Table 4: Potential Nutritional Interventions and Wound Healing Outcomes

Nutritional Intervention	Improved Healing n(%)	No Change n(%)	Worsened Healing n(%)	Odds Ratio (OR)	95% CI	P-value
High Protein Diet	80 (40)	100 (50)	20 (10)	2.0	1.1-3.6	0.02
Vitamin & Mineral Supplementation	90 (45)	95 (47.5)	15 (7.5)	2.5	1.4-4.5	0.002
Comprehensive Nutritional Support	100 (50)	80 (40)	20 (10)	3.0	1.7-5.3	<0.001

Table 4 explores the outcomes of different nutritional interventions on wound healing. It compares the effects of a high-protein diet, vitamin and mineral supplementation, and comprehensive nutritional support on improving healing outcomes. A high-protein diet was associated with improved healing in 40% of the cases, vitamin and mineral supplementation in 45%, and comprehensive nutritional support in 50%. The odds ratios and significant p-values for these interventions (OR=2.0, p=0.02 for high-protein diet; OR=2.5, p=0.002 for supplementation; and OR=3.0, p<0.001 for comprehensive support) suggest that targeted nutritional interventions can significantly enhance wound healing in diabetic foot ulcer patients.

DISCUSSION

Table 1 underscores the significant impact of nutritional status on DFU healing, revealing that well-nourished patients have a considerably better prognosis than their malnourished counterparts. These findings resonate with studies such as those by Zhu Y *et al.*(2023)[5] and Kurian S *et al.*(2023)[6], which highlight the importance of nutritional screening in patients with DFUs. The increased odds of delayed healing in moderately and severely malnourished patients underscore the need for early nutritional interventions. Table 2 demonstrates the variability in identifying malnutrition among DFU patients, depending on the assessment tool used. This variability suggests the necessity of a multifaceted approach to nutritional assessment, as supported by the research of Mutailipu *Met al.*(2023)[7], which advocates for comprehensive nutritional evaluations to better tailor interventions. Table 3 establishes a clear correlation between nutritional status and wound healing rates, with well-nourished patients experiencing significantly faster healing. This is consistent with the findings of Vijaya Raghavan *Jet al.*(2023)[8], who note the critical role of specific nutrients in wound healing processes, including proteins, vitamins, and minerals. The stark contrast in healing rates and outcomes between well-nourished and malnourished patients further emphasizes the potential benefits of nutritional optimization. Table 4 evaluates the efficacy of various nutritional interventions, suggesting that targeted strategies such as high protein diets, vitamin and mineral supplementation, and comprehensive nutritional

support can significantly improve healing outcomes in DFU patients. This aligns with the consensus in the literature on the value of specific nutritional interventions for enhancing wound healing, as seen in the work of Panigrahi S *et al.*(2023)[9], which outlines the mechanisms by which nutrition influences recovery.

CONCLUSION

The cross-sectional evaluation of nutritional status and its impact on diabetic foot ulcer (DFU) healing in a surgical population has underscored the profound influence of nutrition on wound healing outcomes. Our investigation revealed that malnutrition, ranging from moderate to severe levels, significantly hampers the healing process of DFUs, thereby emphasizing the critical role of nutritional assessment and intervention in the management of such patients. The analysis indicated that well-nourished patients exhibited considerably better wound healing rates compared to their malnourished counterparts, with severely malnourished patients facing the most substantial delays in healing. This finding is pivotal, highlighting the necessity for early and comprehensive nutritional assessments for patients presenting with DFUs, ensuring that nutritional interventions can be timely and effectively implemented. Our study also shed light on the effectiveness of various nutritional interventions, including high-protein diets, vitamin and mineral supplementation, and comprehensive nutritional support. These interventions were associated with improved healing outcomes, suggesting that targeted nutritional strategies should be an integral part of the management plan for patients with DFUs, particularly those undergoing surgery. In conclusion, this study reinforces the importance of incorporating nutritional assessment and intervention into the holistic care of patients with diabetic foot ulcers. It is clear that addressing nutritional deficiencies can significantly enhance wound healing, reduce the risk of complications, and ultimately improve the quality of life for this vulnerable population. Moving forward, healthcare providers should prioritize nutritional support as a key component of DFU management, tailoring interventions to meet the specific needs of each patient to optimize healing outcomes.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

- 1. Cross-Sectional Design:** The inherent nature of cross-sectional studies limits the ability to establish causality between nutritional status and wound healing outcomes. Longitudinal studies would be more effective in determining the directionality of these relationships over time.
- 2. Sample Size and Diversity:** Although the study included 200 patients, the sample size may still be too small to capture the full spectrum of variability in nutritional status, DFU characteristics, and healing outcomes. Additionally, the study population may not fully represent the broader diversity of individuals with DFUs, including variations in socioeconomic status, geographic location, and underlying health conditions.
- 3. Self-Reported Dietary Intake:** The use of self-reported dietary intake as part of the nutritional assessment may introduce bias, as participants may not accurately recall their dietary habits. Objective biomarkers of nutritional status would provide more reliable and valid results.
- 4. Single Time Point Assessment:** Nutritional status and wound healing were assessed at a single point in time. Repeated measurements would allow for a better understanding of how changes in nutritional status over time impact wound healing progress.
- 5. Lack of Control for Confounding Variables:** While the study attempted to control for several confounding variables, there may be additional unmeasured factors, such as genetic predispositions, medication adherence, and levels of physical activity, that could influence both nutritional status and wound healing outcomes.
- 6. Generalizability:** The findings from a surgical population may not be directly applicable to all patients with DFUs, particularly those managing their conditions through non-surgical means. The specificities of surgical recovery, including the potential for post-operative complications, may affect both nutritional needs and wound healing differently than in non-surgical contexts.
- 7. Nutritional Assessment Tools:** The study relied on specific tools for nutritional assessment that, while validated, may not capture all aspects of nutritional status that could influence wound healing, such as micronutrient deficiencies or overnutrition.

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