

Evaluating dietetic “prescribing” of food for special medical purposes (FSMP’s) in St Luke’s Radiation Oncology Network

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Introduction

Background

In 2023, the HSE issued the right for CORU Registered Dietitians to recommend Foods for Special Medical Purposes (FSMPs) to be dispensed by Community Pharmacies ⁽¹⁾. As dietitians are not registered prescribers, the term “recommend” is used rather than “prescribe”. FSMPs include; oral nutritional supplements (ONS), enteral tube feeds, milk substitutes and thickening agents. A large number of outpatients attending St Luke’s Radiation Oncology Network (SLRON) require FSMPs. Prior to this guideline implementation; following dietetic assessment and established need for FSMPs, dietitians would require a doctor to write a prescription for each patient that required FSMPs.

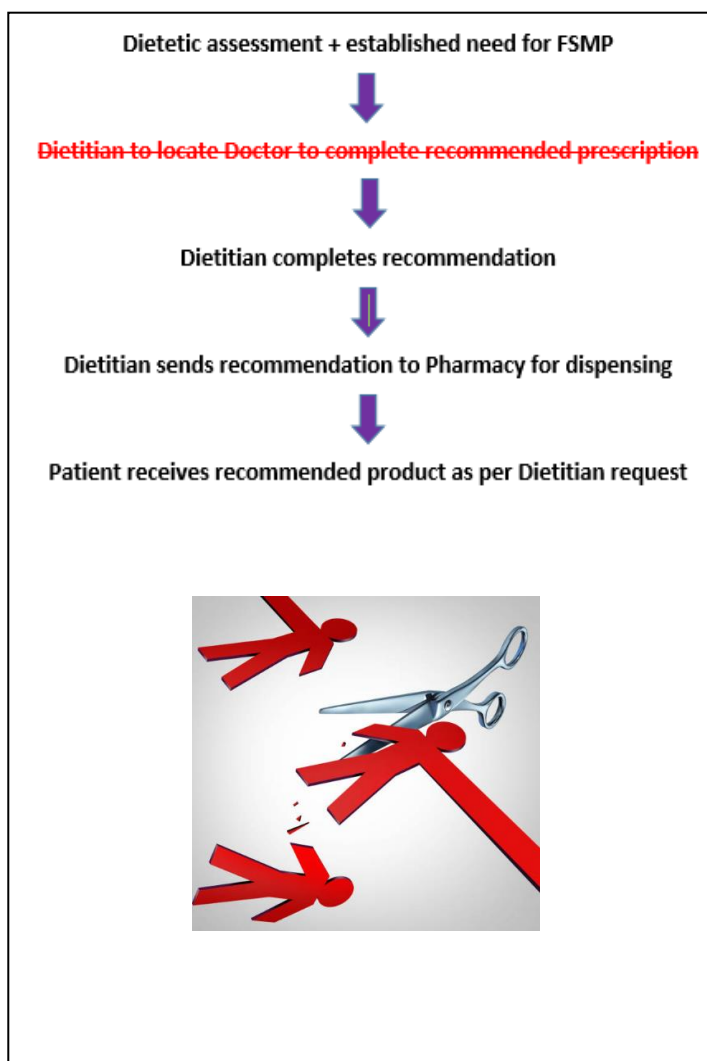
Aim: To evaluate the time and cost saving since FSMP guidelines were introduced at SLRON.

Methods

A SLRON policy was developed based on HSE guidelines, and approved for dietitians sending requests to pharmacies. This included the design of electronic and paper triplicate books ⁽²⁾.

- All 8 dietitians in SLRON kept a log of requests completed.
- Retrospective study: **1st Oct 2023 – 1st Oct 2025.**
- It was estimated, that each prescription completed by a dietitian rather than requesting a doctor to prescribe, would save doctors a minimum of 5 minutes of work time.

  			
Patient Name:			
Address:			
Date of Birth:			
Hospital No:			
Community Drug Scheme Patient Number (GMS/DPS) (if known)			
Please dispense the following Food(s) for Special Medical Purposes (FSMPs) For a searchable list of all FSMPs please see https://www.sspcrs.ie/druglist/pub			
Nutritional Product (Insert GMS code as required)	Dose & Frequency	Duration	Additional Instructions
Registered Dietitian:			
CORU No: DI			
Dietitian GMS No:			
SLRON Site, Bleep No:			
Email Address: @slh.ie			
Work Address:			
Signature:			
Date:			



Results

- Time period:
2 years
- Total “prescriptions”:
1400
- Estimated doctors time saving:
116.7hrs
- Estimated doctors cost saving:
€3,339 - €5,926
- Extra dietetic time:
0



Discussion

This evaluation highlights:

- The volume of requests for FSMPs that dietitians have completed for patients attending SLRON since the guidelines were introduced (2years).
- The time and cost saving for doctors, decreasing their workload and demand to prescribe FSMPs.

Furthermore, this includes zero extra time and potentially more efficient use of time for dietitians completing requests following dietetic assessment.

Further research is recommended to review the breakdown of FSMPs requested, the perceived time and cost savings for dietitians and the perceived benefit to patients of receiving the correct FSMP as efficiently as possible, while discontinuing clinically inappropriate FSMPs.

References

- HSE (2022) Procedure for Dietitian Recommendation of Foods for Special Medical Purposes (FSMPs).
- Guidelines for the recommending of Foods for Special Medical Purposes (FSMPs) by Registered Dietitians for Outpatients at St Luke’s Radiation Oncology Network (SLRON) (2023).