Patient and carer experience of nutrition care throughout and beyond treatment for head and neck cancer
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AIM
To explore patient and carer experience of nutrition care from diagnosis of head and neck cancer (HNC) and over a period of one year post treatment completion to identify areas for improvement of service delivery.

METHODS
Semi structured interviews (Baseline, 2 weeks, 3 months and 1 year post treatment)
- 20 patients (8 chemoradiation, 6 surgery, 6 post-operative radiation therapy)
- 15 carers (5 chemoradiation, 3 surgery, 7 post-operative radiation therapy)
Data analysed using reflexive thematic analysis based on Gadamerian hermeneutic inquiry

RESULTS

Theme 1
The battle to maintain control
Subthemes
1. Health and nutrition beliefs
2. Weight loss roller coaster
3. Acceptance of feeding tube
4. Gatekeeper role of patient
5. Invisible load of carer

Theme 2
Navigating the road ahead
Subthemes
1. Challenges comprehending information provided
2. Information acceptability and inclusivity
3. Moving away from hospital environment
4. Peer support

CONCLUSION
Findings from this study highlight:
• Tensions in the care relationships between patients, carers and staff
• Changing nutrition needs and focus throughout the treatment and recovery journey

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