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Practical screening tools for severely malnourished children in sub-Saharan Africa

Even though severe malnutrition is a major cause of death among many hospitalized children in sub-Saharan Africa, the current recommended assessment method using weight for height to determine if a child is malnourished is not always feasible in these clinical settings. In this study, researchers evaluated an assessment using mid upper arm circumference (MUAC) and the clinical sign "visible severe wasting" to predict the probability of death among malnourished children at a district hospital as compared to the currently recommended weight-for-height z score (WHZ). The researchers found that MUAC and visible severe wasting performed as well as the recommended WHZ method in predicting inpatient death. They suggest that when also considering cost and practicality, MUAC may be more appropriate than WHZ for identifying severe malnutrition in children aged between one and five years who are admitted to African district hospital.

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