Selecting a Protein Modular for Oncology Patients: What's the Scoop?

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**Learning Outcome:** Upon completion, participant will be able to define appropriate criteria when choosing a protein modular for oncology patients.

Oncology patients have higher metabolic needs from cancer cachexia, taste changes, or difficulty swallowing requiring additional calories and protein supplementation. Choosing a protein modular without additives can be challenging as patients may need to avoid excess glutamine, arginine, beta-hydroxy-beta-methylbutyrate, or soy. During active cancer treatment it's recommended to avoid herbs or high doses of vitamin and mineral supplementation. Research has shown that these additives, often found in protein supplements, may decrease the efficacy of cancer treatments. Using the AND Nutrition Care Manual’s Formulary Database of oral solutions and amino acid/metabolites to search for protein modulars, selection criteria was developed to meet the needs of our oncology population and the Food and Nutrition Department. Inclusion criteria were unflavored powder, ten-twenty grams protein, versatility in food preparation. Exclusion criteria were immuno-modulators, lactose, gluten, GMO, and artificial sweeteners. Cost, taste, preparation ease, and patient perception of product were also considered. For evaluation and comparison, Excel spreadsheets were utilized. Of the six-hundred and fifteen modulars, thirteen met our selection criteria. After conducting a taste test with dietitians, an unavored one-hundred percent whey protein isolate with thirty grams of protein per scoop (33 gram weight) was selected. Policies for preparation were developed and nourishment staff were trained and provided with recipes. Positive feedback was obtained from both dietitians and patients regarding taste and consistency. Next steps include researching a pea protein supplement for vegan patients and partnering with the hospital wound care team for early intervention and administration of protein modulars for wound healing.

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