

From Hypotonia and Immobility: To Awakening and Curiosity After an Episode of Severe Acute Malnutrition

INTRODUCTION

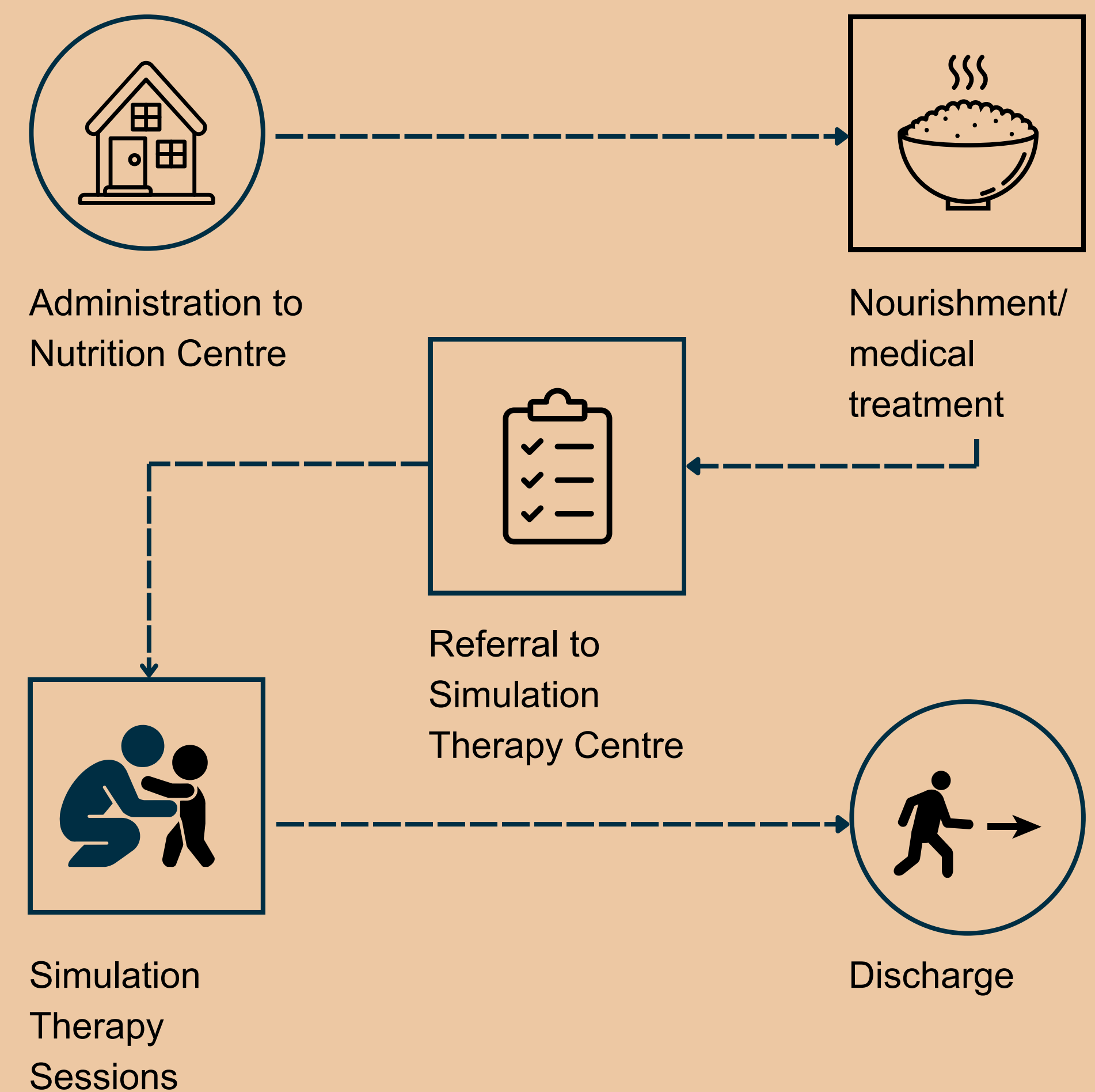
Acute malnutrition in children under 5 has severe impact on their overall development. While nutritional care is a priority, stimulation is essential to restore their ability to play, experiment and thrive.

CASE DESCRIPTION

Nimao, an 8 month old girl, lives with her parents and eight siblings in an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in Burao, Somaliland.

Coming from a socio-economically disadvantaged environment, she was diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and admitted to a maternal and child health centre for nutritional treatment.

Once she was medically stable, the nutrition centre/partner, referred Nimao to Humanity & Inclusion's Stimulation Therapy service.



REHABILITATION INTERVENTIONS

Seven individual stimulation therapy sessions by a qualified therapist, that included:

- Therapeutic games that help relearn head control, trunk activation, independent sitting, crawling, grasping toys.
- Parent-child interaction and skills transfer

Continuation of therapeutic games by a committed mother, building the child-parent relationship, in their home environment.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT

- Inability to roll over
- Inability to sit up even with support
- Hypotonia
- Inactivity of the lower limbs
- Absence of voluntary grasping
- Poor responsiveness to sounds and her name.

OUTCOMES

- Independent rolling over
- Prolonged sitting
- Crawling
- Grasping objects
- Smiling
- Curiosity about the environment
- Improved child-parent interactions and increased parent confidence in meeting the needs of their child

Conclusions

This case illustrates the importance of integrating individualized stimulation into the care pathway for acutely malnourished children. It highlights the importance of parental involvement in daily stimulation and the essential role of rehabilitation expertise to support child development.

Further implementation of action-research projects should help to objectively demonstrate the impact of this approach in different contexts and encourage its adoption by health authorities.

“Let us, all together, offer children comprehensive care consisting of specialized medical and nutritional care and playful, daily and tailored stimulation adapted to the child's needs.”