



Royal College
of Nursing

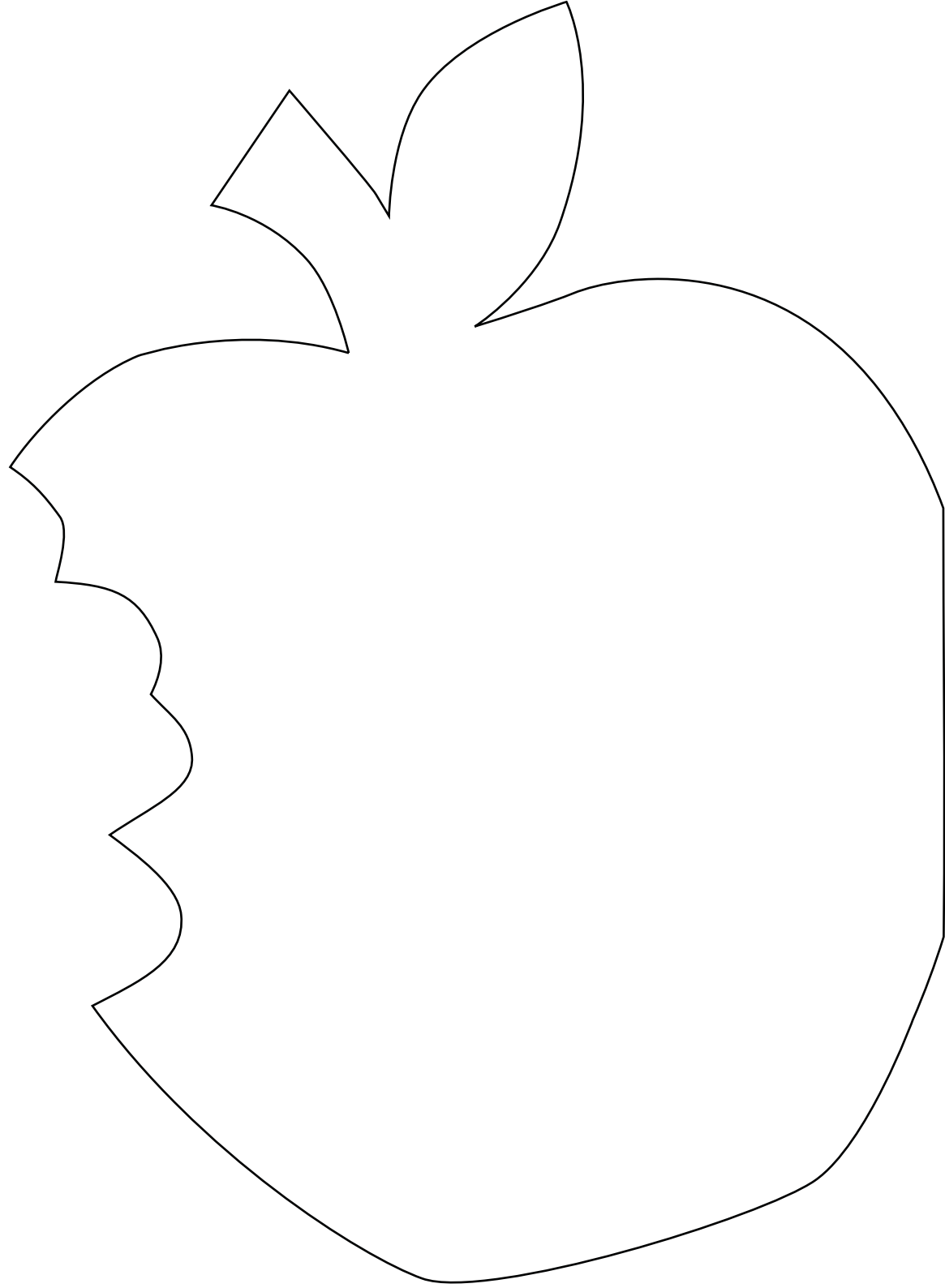
nutrition now

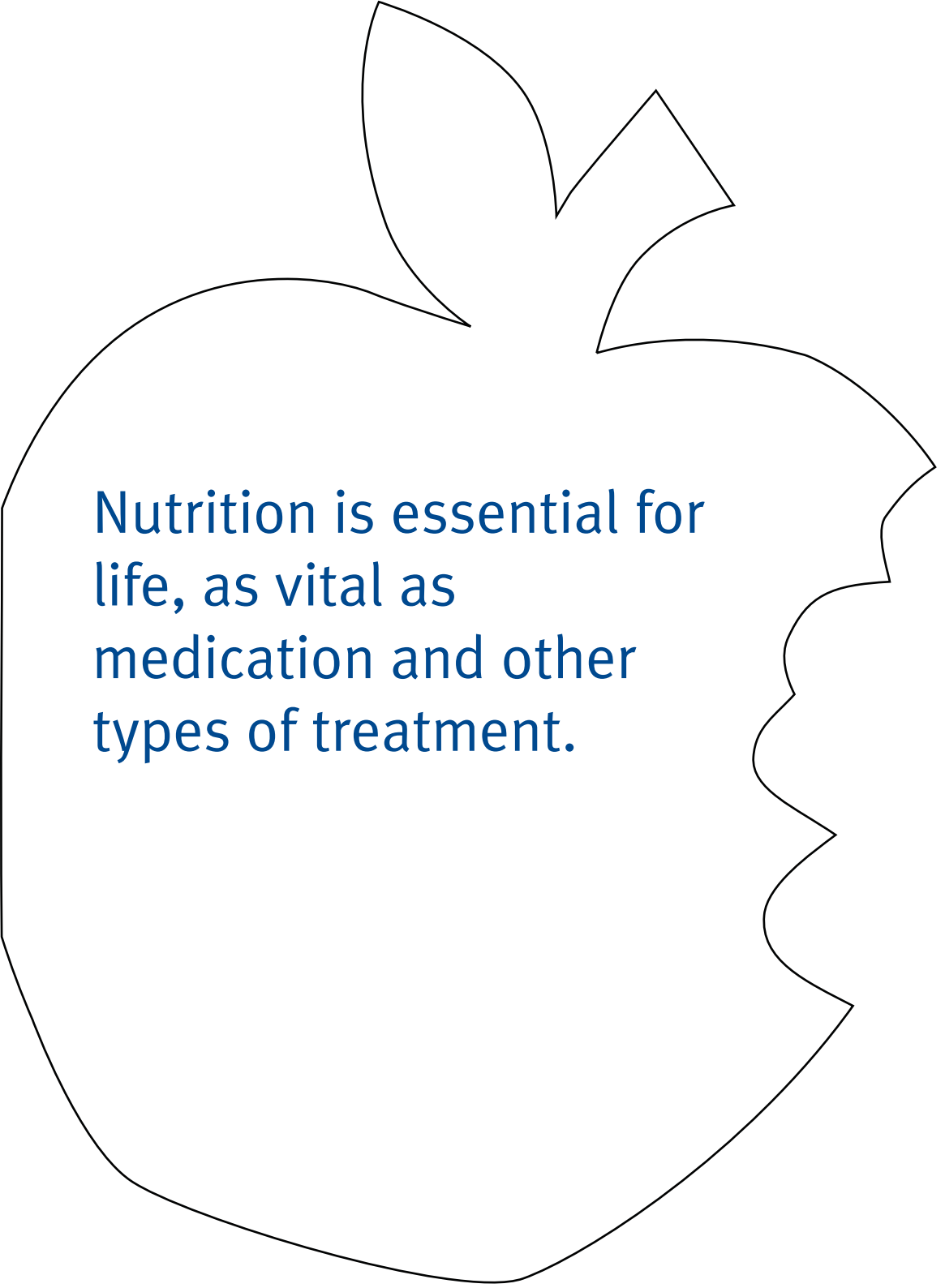
Principles for nutrition
and hydration

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Nutrition



The image features a simple black outline of an apple. The apple is positioned on the left side of the frame, with its stem and two leaves extending towards the top center. The right side of the apple is cut off, creating a jagged, irregular edge. Inside the apple's outline, there is a block of text in a dark blue, sans-serif font.

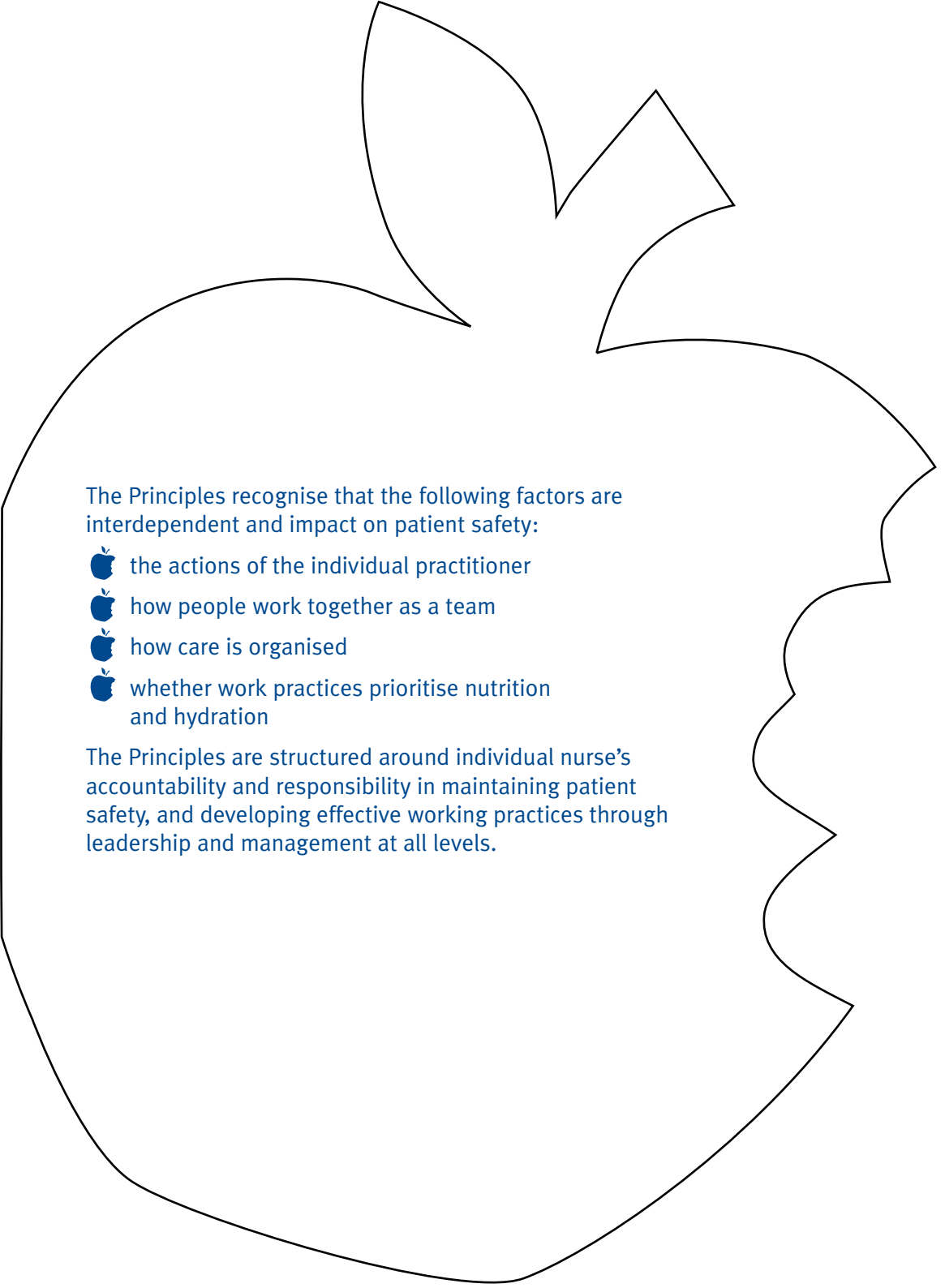
Nutrition is essential for
life, as vital as
medication and other
types of treatment.







Introduction

The Royal College of Nursing has developed these Principles to help nurses of all levels to improve the nutrition and hydration of patients, clients and users within demanding and challenging settings and times.

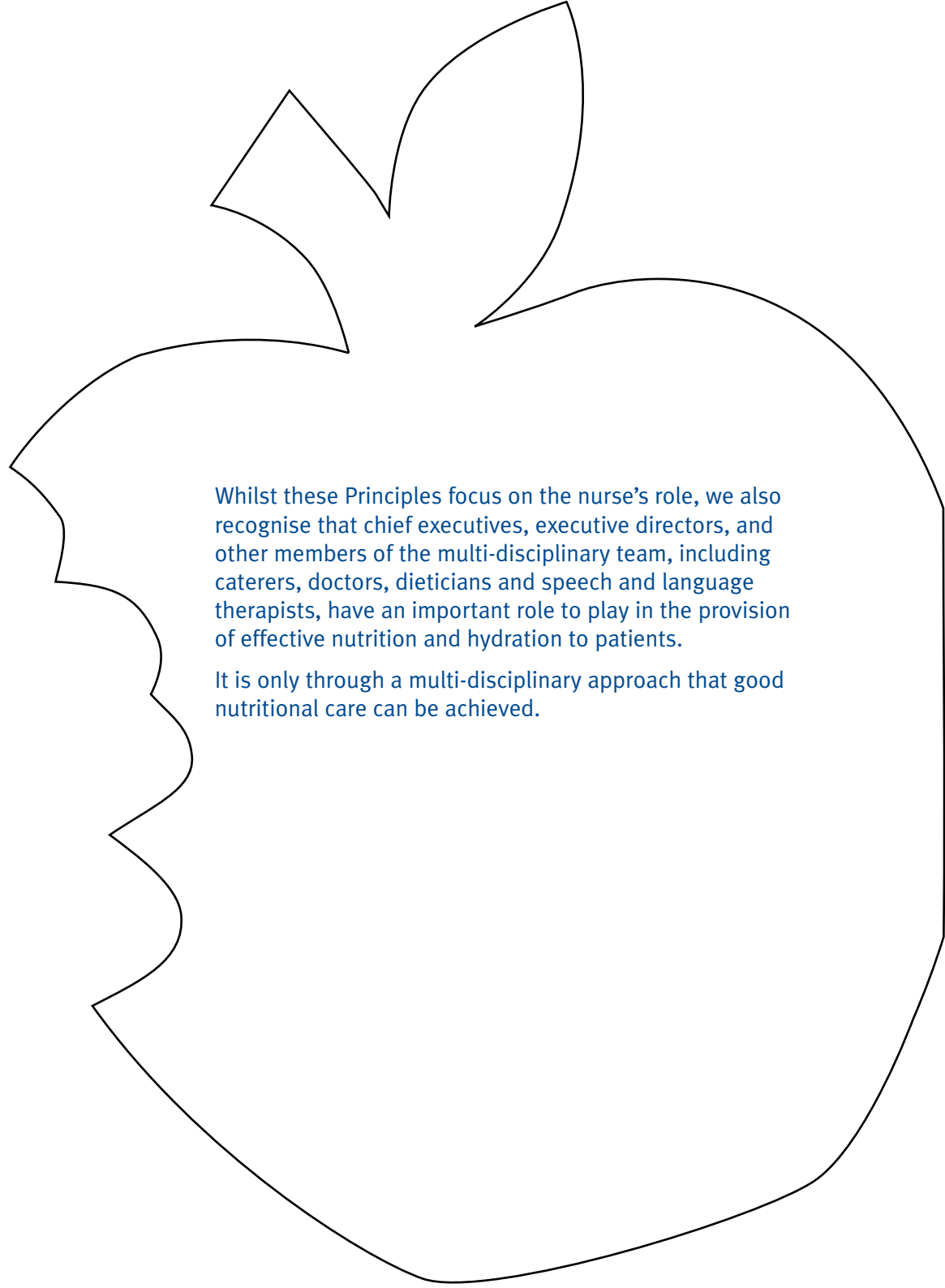
The Principles will help you and your team to think about what can be done to improve the experience of patients, clients and users in relation to nutrition and hydration.



The Principles recognise that the following factors are interdependent and impact on patient safety:

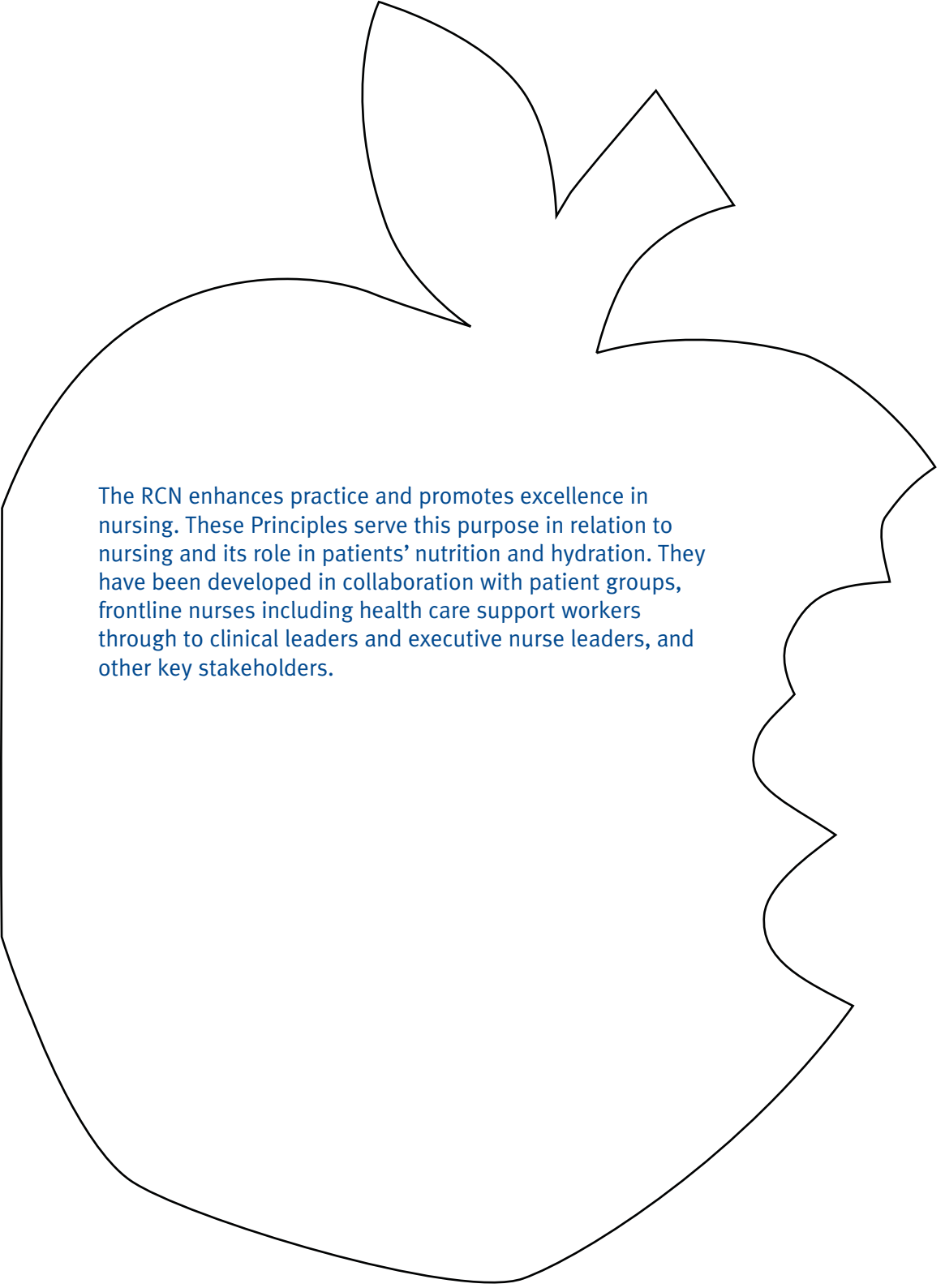
-  the actions of the individual practitioner
-  how people work together as a team
-  how care is organised
-  whether work practices prioritise nutrition and hydration

The Principles are structured around individual nurse's accountability and responsibility in maintaining patient safety, and developing effective working practices through leadership and management at all levels.



Whilst these Principles focus on the nurse's role, we also recognise that chief executives, executive directors, and other members of the multi-disciplinary team, including caterers, doctors, dieticians and speech and language therapists, have an important role to play in the provision of effective nutrition and hydration to patients.

It is only through a multi-disciplinary approach that good nutritional care can be achieved.



The RCN enhances practice and promotes excellence in nursing. These Principles serve this purpose in relation to nursing and its role in patients' nutrition and hydration. They have been developed in collaboration with patient groups, frontline nurses including health care support workers through to clinical leaders and executive nurse leaders, and other key stakeholders.



Why nutrition is important

Food and water play an essential role in all of our lives in terms of our physical, psychological, spiritual, cultural and social well being and therefore sit easily with the nursing philosophy of holistic practice.

The body's immune system is highly dependent on nutritional status and research shows malnourished medical and surgical patients experience higher rates of complications¹ and stay in hospital 30% longer than nourished patients².

1. McCamish M (1993) Malnutrition and nutrition support interventions: costs, benefits and outcomes, *Nutrition*, 9 (6),pp.556-557.
2. Elia M, Stratton R, Russell C and Green F (2005) *The cost of disease-related malnutrition in the UK and economic considerations for the use of oral nutritional supplements (ONS) in adults*, Redditch: British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition.






Key messages

- 1** Nutrition and hydration are essential to care, as vital as medication and other types of treatment.
- 2** It is our responsibility as members of a multi-disciplinary team to ensure patients in our care have the right nutrition and hydration at the right time.
- 3** Working practices that prioritise nutrition and hydration can overcome the challenges that stand in the way of excellence – through management and leadership, professional development, sharing of best practice and by working in partnership with patients, families and carers.



Principles: accountability

Every member of the nursing team is accountable for:

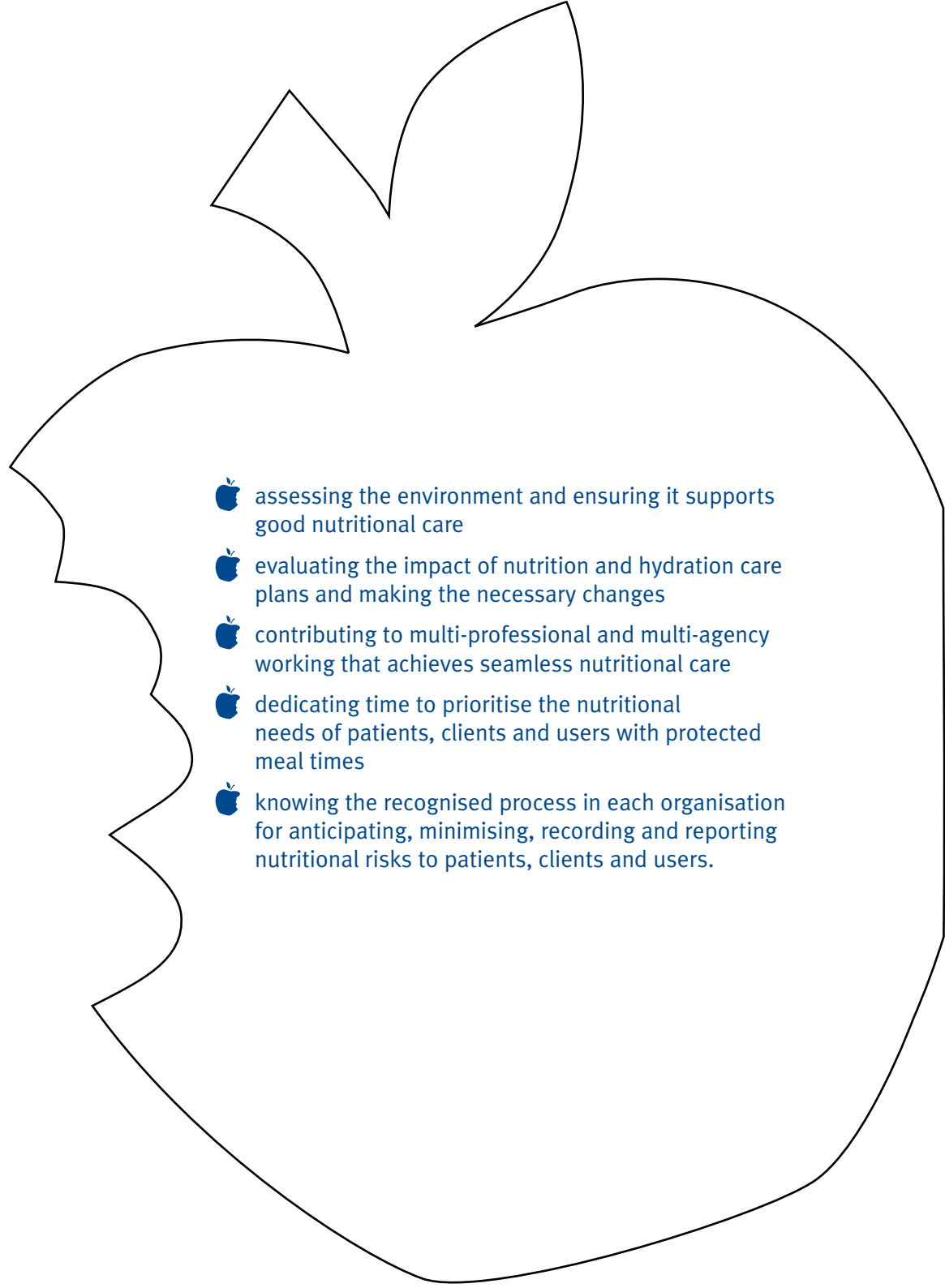
-  providing some aspect of nutritional care, be that at frontline delivery or executive board level
-  assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating the nutritional and hydration needs of patients, clients and users
-  contributing to ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review of the nutrition of patients, clients and users through clinical governance systems



Principles: responsibility




All nurses are responsible for:

- 🍏 providing person-centred and evidence-based care. In relation to nutrition this means ensuring that all aspects of nutrition are taken into account and acted upon in the context of the person's individual needs
- 🍏 keeping up to date through accessing and using quality information and evidence about nutrition and hydration through continuous professional development
- 🍏 challenging poor practice in relation to nutrition and hydration

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- 🍏 assessing the environment and ensuring it supports good nutritional care
 - 🍏 evaluating the impact of nutrition and hydration care plans and making the necessary changes
 - 🍏 contributing to multi-professional and multi-agency working that achieves seamless nutritional care
 - 🍏 dedicating time to prioritise the nutritional needs of patients, clients and users with protected meal times
 - 🍏 knowing the recognised process in each organisation for anticipating, minimising, recording and reporting nutritional risks to patients, clients and users.



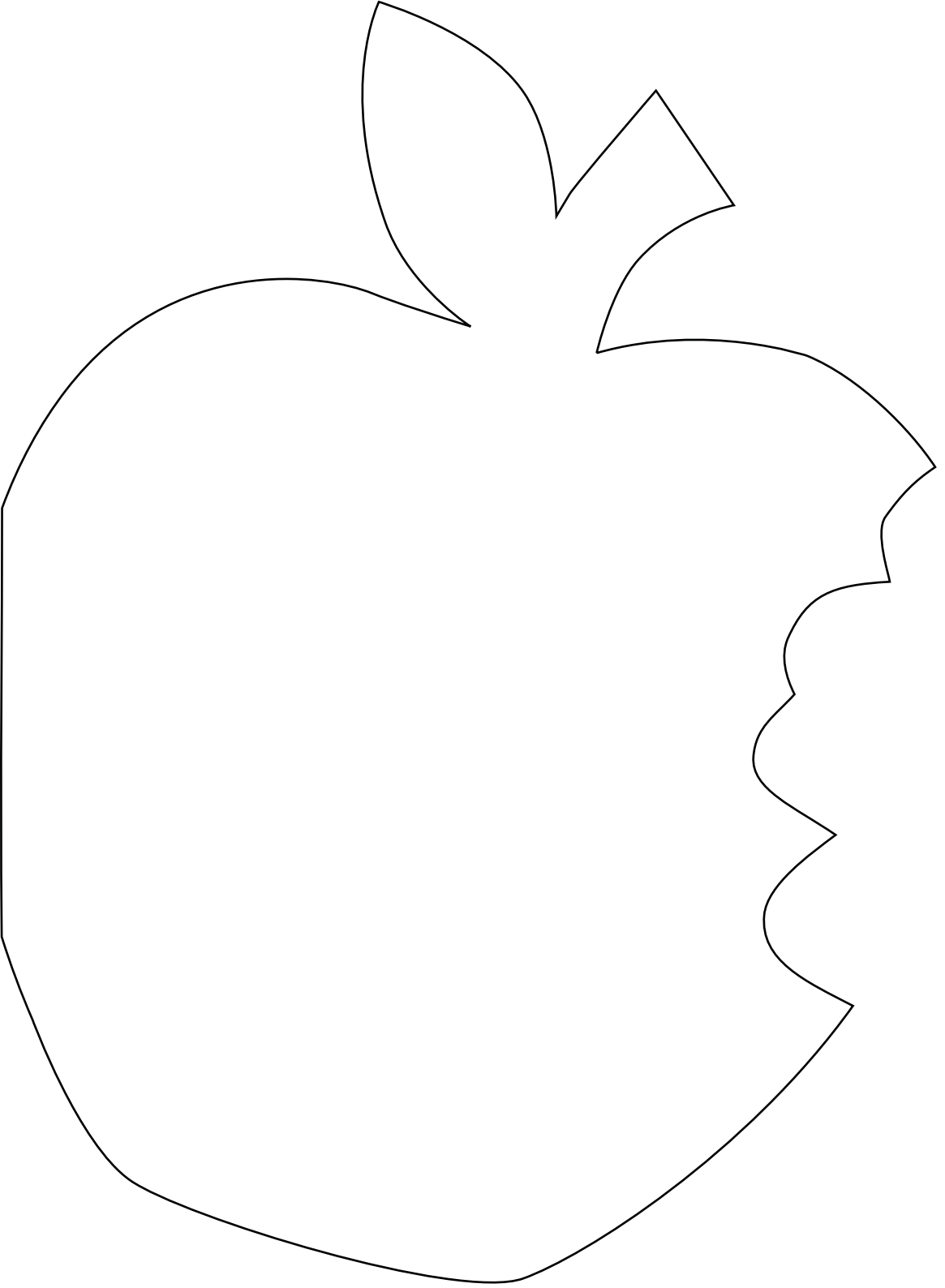
Principles: leadership and management

-  Executive nurses have the responsibility for ensuring that nutritional care is prioritised at board level and that systems are in place to support this
-  Team leaders are responsible for enabling effective organisation of care so that the provision of food and nutrition will be prioritised and patients, clients and users experience care that meets their needs as they see them
-  All nurses in their leadership role are responsible for enabling others to provide good nutritional care.



For more information

Further resources illustrating how these principles can be used in practice together with the most up to date evidence are available on the RCN 'Nutrition Now' website. Go to www.rcn.org.uk/nutritionnow





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