PATIENT SURVEY INVESTIGATING CATERING CHOICES ON CARE FOR THE ELDERLY WARDS

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Background: Elderly patients often lose weight during hospital stays. Oral intake can be diminished despite higher energy requirements. Weight loss is usually multifactorial; however we aimed to investigate if the hospital catering may contribute to this and what affect the intervention of ‘afternoon tea’ may have. The aim of this survey was to investigate patient attitudes towards current catering choices offered on the Care of the Elderly wards at Hull Royal Infirmary.

Sampling methods: 100 inpatients over the age of 80 were surveyed between 25th May and 27th June at Hull Royal Infirmary. Patients either completed the survey independently, with the questions being asked by the authors or with help from family or friends. The survey consisted of 10 questions covering food choices, meal times, snack choices and free comments.

Results: 83% of patients surveyed were satisfied with current food choices. 64% were unaware snacks were available. Snack choices desired included fruit, cheese and crackers and sandwiches. 62% of patients would prefer main meals in the evening. Open comments revealed general dissatisfaction with food freshness and variety. Approximately 70% would like ‘afternoon tea’ (biscuits and cake offered around 3 p.m.).

Conclusions: Overall, patients were satisfied with the current hospital catering. It appears snack availability should be advertised to patients with a greater variety offered. Patients prefer hot meals only in the evening.

Patients were open to ‘afternoon tea’. We have secured provisional funding to offer this on ‘Care of the Elderly’ wards. We plan to investigate if this intervention delivers an increase in patient satisfaction as well as objective measures.