Determining food preferences of hospital inpatients: what do people want to eat when sick?

Claire Dux1, Tegan Stuckey1, Jennifer Ellick1, Tenielle Hamlin1, Christine Eadeh1
1. Royal Brisbane and Womens Hospital 2. Queensland University of Technology

Introduction

Malnutrition prevalence in acute public hospitals in Australia is 30-35%1 and nutrition status can decline during hospitalisation due to poor intake2.

We aimed to determine food preferences of inpatients at a public tertiary hospital to inform menu changes.

Methods

A survey was conducted (adapted from Williams, 1992) which asked patients to rate 222 food items on a 9 point hedonic scale (1=dislike extremely to 9=like extremely). Data were collected over 15 day period across 17 wards.

Results

243 surveys were completed (67% response rate). Respondents:

- 56% female
- 72% >65 years
- 43% reported good/very good appetite
- 83% reported no change in taste

Preferences did not vary significantly by age or appetite.

Results

Findings are similar to food preference studies conducted in 1988, 2001 and 2012.

Menu changes implemented:
- Increased frequency of Roast Potato
- Addition of bacon to breakfast menu
- Increased frequency of Spaghetti Bolognaise
- Removal of Nut Meat

Future work

- Digital Food Service Satisfaction surveys implemented to gather more patient food satisfaction/preference data.
- Vegan/Vegetarian Menu Review

1. Argawal, 2012
2. Braunschweig, 2000