Reducing the usage and cost of thickened fluids in a large hospital: a case study for change

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Introduction
Thickened fluids (TF) are often recommended for patients with dysphagia, however they can be unpalatable for patients and costly for health services.

The need to implement the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) provided the opportunity to review TF provision at RBWH.

Methods
1. Introduction of IDDSI fluids through communication (memorandums, E-Flyers, posters, TV screens in the kitchen), education across staff groups (via various modes), and changes to meal management systems.
2. Change of Thick Fluid products (in line with updated state-wide tenders)
3. Replacement of high waste products (i.e. milk-based/fortified TF replaced with dairy desserts).

Usage and cost data were reviewed for six months pre and post change (data from patient meal management system). Patient satisfaction and consumption data were collected over nine days using the Meal Assessment Tool (scale 1-5, with 5 being highest).

Results
• Safe transition to IDDSI (no reported incidents)
• Good patient satisfaction with new products (n=20).

• Wastage of delivered product remains high (65%, 464 products observed).
• Main reasons for wastage; feeling unwell (28%), being asleep (17%) or dislike of the item (17%)

Discussion
Significant savings in cost and usage are achievable using a comprehensive and multi-modal approach to change.

There is a need to further explore reasons for high wastage of TF and strategies to address this.