

“The development and implementation of a mealtime assistance competency program for allied health assistants “

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Ensuring that people have their hydration and nutritional requirements met during hospital admissions is an important concern.

A range of problems contribute to this not always being achieved. Patients with impaired concentration and impaired ability to feed themselves are at risk of not having enough food and fluid. Patients with swallowing problems usually take more time having their meals and have the added risk of developing aspiration pneumonia.

Assisting people with these problems is time consuming and often nursing staff and speech pathologists are unable to adequately assist during mealtimes due to staffing constraints.

Deploying Allied Health Assistants who have completed a competency program in mealtime assistance is a cost effective way of addressing this issue.

This poster outlines the competency program has been developed at Alfred Health and is targeted at providing AHAs with the skills needed to assist people who have these specific problems during mealtimes. The poster lists the key learning objectives; the tasks included training program and the assessment protocols for these tasks.

A learning matrix was developed so that both allied health assists and speech pathologists can clearly document that the key learning criteria have been met in the training and assessment aspects of the program. The training material and practical sessions is delineated.

Finally, the results of observations of AHA assisted mealtimes and feedback from AHAs, post training, are also included.