

The effectiveness of a volunteer meal assistance program to improve the nutritional intake of aged care patients in hospital

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Aims: To assess the impact of the Volunteer Meal Assistance Program (VMAP) on the nutritional intake of aged care inpatients at Western Health (WH). To evaluate the acceptability of this meal time environment initiative for patients and staff.

Background: Malnutrition is a significant and ongoing concern in the hospital setting. The 2010 Australasian Nutrition Care Survey Day identified a 39% prevalence of Malnutrition amongst acute patients in Western Health [1]. It is widely recognized that malnutrition can impact on morbidity, functional capacity and mortality, contributing to increased lengths of stay, adding to complexity of care and increased health costs. Research has found that up to 40% of hospital food can be wasted, a patients inability to feed themselves can be a contributing factor, lack of feeding assistance can contribute to unnecessary food wastage and reduced nutritional intake which can subsequently increase risk of malnutrition [2,3].

Methods: Data pertaining to demographics, Malnutrition Screening Tool (MST) scores and dietary intake was collected at baseline (prior to VMAP instigation) and again at 3 months (post VMAP instigation) on subacute/aged care WH patients. All patients and staff on the 2 wards will be invited to complete a satisfaction questionnaire at 3 months post implementation of VMAP.

Results: Nutritional intake of patients pre and post the introduction of VMAP will be assessed to see if the program has impacted on energy and protein intake. Pre-implementation data (n=23) (39% male and 61% female, mean age 80y) will be analysed including average intake of energy is 1169.8kJ and protein is 13.8g at the lunch meal. This data will be compared with the post implementation results. MST indicated that 39% of these patients were moderate to high risk of malnutrition. Patients and staff views on the program's effectiveness and sustainability will also be reported.

References:

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