

An Evaluation of Patients' Attitudes on Hospital Meal Service

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The aim of provision of hospital meal service is to provide proper nutrition to inward patients, ensuring their health and quick recovery. Therefore, a proper hospital meal service will improve the nutritional care and also minimize the wastage of food. Since the food is prepared in large quantity, improving the quality of food provision in hospital setting remains a difficult challenge.

The objectives of this study were to identify and describe the problems, if any, associated with diet received during hospital stay among inward patients in Teaching hospital, Peradeniya and to evaluate patients' attitudes on hospital meal service.

This was a cross sectional study carried out in medical, surgical and orthopedic wards of Teaching Hospital Peradeniya over one month based on a pretested structured questionnaire. The questions were designed to focus on patients' satisfaction regarding nutritive value of hospital meals, meal preparation, and food presentation and to reflect their suggestions to improve the quality of hospital diet from patients' point of view. Consecutive sampling method was applied and results were expressed as mean \pm standard deviation or percentages depending on the variable type.

Out of forty one patients, 51% were medical patients and the rest was surgical. Mean age of study group was 53 ± 16 years and 56% of subjects were males. The mean BMI was $20.5 \text{ kg/m}^2 \pm 3.8$. Majority of patients (58.5%, $n = 24$) were satisfied with the nutritive value of the food provided and the way of food presentation (78%, $n = 32$). However 56% of the respondents did not consume the whole portion provided. The main reasons for not consuming the whole portion or for refusal of certain food items were inadequate taste (24.4%, $n = 10$) and inadequate cooking (19.5%, $n = 8$). There was a significant relationship between positive attitude towards the hospital diet and the consumption of whole portion ($p < 0.01$). Proper cooking, providing more choices, increasing the amount were few suggestions made by patients to improve the quality of hospital diet.

In conclusion, the patients' attitude towards current hospital meal service is satisfactory. However food preparation should be improved in relation to providing more choices, maintaining proper temperature and timing of serving.