

AUDIT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DIETETIC ASSISTANT ON A RENAL WARD

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Problem: Many renal inpatients are at risk of malnutrition and often do not have an adequate dietary intake due to poor choice of food at meal times, inappropriate portion sizes and lack of provision of snacks on the ward. The Dietetic Assistant (DA) works with the renal dietitian to ensure nutritional needs of the patient are met.

Purpose: To audit the role of the DA on the renal ward and evaluate how effective the DA is at promoting good nutrition and improved dietary intake.

Design: The study was in two parts: An observational study - completed on 2 days when the DA was on the ward and 2 days when the DA was off and a patient satisfaction questionnaire - completed for 1 day on 2 alternate weeks. All the information was collected and analysed.

Findings: Observational study - The sample size was 48 patients on both DA days and 48 on non DA days (exclusions included patients off the ward on overnight leave/dialysis/at theatre and patients who were nil by mouth/on clear fluids).

Aspect of Food Service

DA Days %

Non DA Days

Received menu	Received desired meal choice	Received correct portion size
100	100	96
94	82	91
Food covered	Condiments/sauces provided	Serviette provided
100	88	96
87	76	11
Appropriate cutlery provided	Alternative to missed meal offered	Snacks offered
100	100	100
86	33	0

Patient Satisfaction Questionnaire - 46% response rate. 91% of patients were offered snacks, 82% thought that the availability of snacks was acceptable. 53% of patients reported that food was served at the correct temperature, 47% reported that the food was cold. 79% of patients reported receiving the correct amount of food, 21 % of patients did not receive the portion size requested on the menu. 92% of patients prescribed nutritional supplements were offered a range of flavours by the DA. 53% of patients rated the food as satisfactory, 21% rated the food as good.

Conclusion: The audit highlights the importance of the role of the Dietetic Assistant on a renal ward.

Relevance: The audit provided evidence of the effectiveness of the Dietetic Assistant in ensuring adequate food and nutritional supplement provision on the renal ward. Dietetic Assistants on other renal wards are needed to improve the nutritional status of all renal inpatients.