

Food Production and Presentation in Aged Care

Position

Food production and presentation should be prioritised for consumers of aged care services. Dietitians Australia advocates for changes to residential care systems to include adequate funding for implementation of menu standards and quality meals.

Evidence-based National Meal Guidelines with governance and accountability frameworks for residential aged care providers, are urgently needed. Governance, monitoring and evaluation frameworks for existing National Meal Guidelines for home delivered and centre-based meal programs for older Australians are also required.

Recommendations

1. Australian Government to provide funding to approved providers of residential aged care, adding to the base amount for the 'Basic Daily Fee' by \$10 per resident per day. The additional funding should only be provided on the condition that the provider conducts an annual review of the adequacy of the goods and services (including meals) it has provided to meet the basic living needs of residents, particularly their nutritional requirements. Providers must prepare a written report, in consultation with an Accredited Practising Dietitian, on how food and nutritional requirements have been met.
2. Australian Government to establish a minimum spend within the 'Basic Daily Fee' on food and ingredients for elderly consumers in residential aged care (noting that \$6.08 per aged care resident per day, as found in an Australian study,² is grossly insufficient to meet the dietary needs of elderly consumers). An index will need to be established and applied for providers located in rural and remote locations to cover the additional cost of food transport.
3. Australian Government to urgently fund:
 - a. The development of evidence-based 'National Meal Guidelines', including governance and accountability frameworks, for residential aged care providers; and
 - b. The establishment of governance, monitoring and evaluation frameworks for the existing National Meal Guidelines for home delivered and centre-based meal programs for older Australians.
4. All Aged Care Providers are to establish an inter-professional team to plan, implement and monitor food and nutrition services which includes an Accredited Practising Dietitian, food service staff, nursing staff, care workers, family/carers and volunteers.
5. Australian Government to further support Aged Care Providers with incentives (like [Sustainability Advantage](#)) to integrate sustainable practices into their foodservice operations, such as strategies to reduce food waste and water usage, to reduce the impact of the expanding aged care industry on our environment.

Background

Food presentation is a key component of delivering a high quality foodservice in residential aged care,¹ as consumer satisfaction with meals contributes to food intake. Food production and presentation in this setting is challenging due to the budgetary restrictions,² and high requirement for texture modified diets³. Choice of meals and meal ordering made at the point of service (as compared to pre-ordering) also increases overall satisfaction.

Presentation of texture modified meals provides another complexity however with staff commitment, texture modified meals can be presented to be appetising for consumers. Accredited Practising Dietitians (APDs) are experts in medical nutrition therapy, working with consumers and staff to deliver high quality food presentation, including of texture modified meals.

References

1. Wright ORL, Capra S, Connelly L. DOI: 10.1007/s12603-010-0123-9
2. Hugo C, Isenring E, Sinclair D, Agarwal E. 2018. DOI: 10.1111/1747-0080.12368
3. Cichero JAY, Lam P, Steele CM et al. 2017. DOI: 10.1007/s00455-016-9758-y