

Improving Food in Residential Care

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Introduction

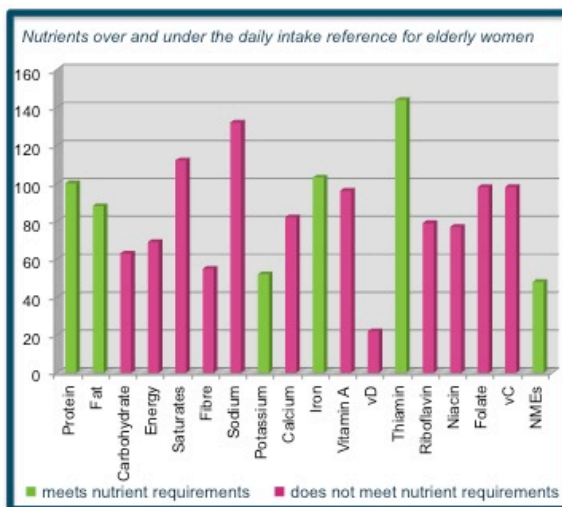
5% of the UK's elderly population reside in care homes¹. Research surrounding the nutritional status of the elderly highlights the risk of under-nutrition in care even though food provision is adequate^{2,3,4,5,6}. An estimated 41% of hospital admissions surrounding malnutrition derive from care home settings and the cost of treatment is double that of non-malnourished patients^{1,7}. In Kirklees, food quality, nutrition levels and the impact of nutrition and hydration on wellbeing and hospital admissions were identified in the home care sector.

Aims

To ascertain both the nutritional provision in residential care homes in Kirklees and the nutritional knowledge of care home staff, to ultimately meet service users' dietary requirements by improving the food served in care home settings.

Method

- 10% of Kirklees care homes were visited
- Qualitative and quantitative questions were posed to managers, staff and residents
- Observations were made of the dining environment
- Menus were nutritionally analysed using NetWISP
- Findings were presented to Kirklees Council's Public Health team



Results

- Mean average of £3.47 spent per resident per day.
- Primarily managers and cooks designed care home menus
- Most commonly mentioned snack was biscuits. However, when grouping product types together, cake was the most popular (39%).
- Eleven macro- or micronutrients did not meet recommended daily intake references for elderly females.

Conclusions

- NetWISP menu analysis indicated kilocalorie content, carbohydrates and ten micronutrients did not meet the required daily intake reference for elderly females.
- Managers and cooks mainly trained in food hygiene and safety, designed the care home menus.
- Inadequate nutrient provision demonstrated a need for specialised nutrition training for care home staff, in order for food to meet service users' dietary requirements.

Kirklees Council now offers free bespoke Nutrition for the Elderly training to care home staff. This is provided by the Food Initiatives Nutrition Education (FINE) project.



References

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