Best practices of food waste management in the European healthcare sector

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Food waste in numbers

- Each year **1/3 of global food production** for human consumption is lost or wasted before reaching our plates. This is equivalent to 1.3 billion tonnes of edible food.

- In Europe and North America waste on average **95-115 kg/year**

- In industrialized countries **40% of losses happen at retail or consumer level**, but also in prior phases

- **Waste food means waste** money, labour, resources (energy, land, water) and increases GHG (8%)

- By saving **1/4 of the food currently lost or wasted**, **870 million hungry people could be feed**
In healthcare facilities

- **UK**
  - 121,000 tonnes of food waste and 49,300 tonnes of packaging waste
  - 93% to landfill or disposed of down the drain (macerators)
  - Of the food purchased, 18% is wasted:
    - 13.5% vs. 4.5%
  - Total cost of food waste to the HC sector is £230 million

- **Ireland**
  - Acute hospitals: 3,100 Tonnes (= €7.2 Million)
  - Pediatric hospitals: 2,000 Tonnes (=€4.4 Million)

- **The Netherlands**
  - 25% of the value of the food supply
  - Potential savings: €200,000

- **Capital Region (Denmark)**
  - 4,500 tonnes of waste annually - a portion of which is made up of food waste

- A certain amount of food waste is inevitable in a hospital setting
- Limited data available due to lack of quantification assessment
• By wasting less food, hospitals have the opportunity to:
  – Invest in better and healthier meals
  – Reduce complications and increase speed recovery
  – Fight against climate change and generate social and economic benefits
  – Change the old model of doing things – step for sustainability resource efficiency

• Current targets:
  – International and European targets:
    • 12.3 SDGs – 50% reduction by 2030
    • Part of the EC Circular Economy Package
  – National targets – further targets needed:
    • UK - Courtauld Commitment - 20% reduction in food and drink waste from manufacturing and retail
    • Dutch government - 20% reduction in food waste by 2015
HCWH Europe’s food waste survey

- **10 hospitals interviewed** in: Belgium (1), Denmark (4), France (1), Spain (2) and UK (2)

- Also, 2 institutions interviewed (Ireland and The Netherlands)

- **7 main questions**
  - How bad is the problem of food waste in your hospital?
  - What are the main reasons for food waste in your hospital?
  - How is food waste managed in your hospital? What is the process for controlling and/or monitoring it?
  - What foods are most likely to be wasted in your hospital? Why?
  - What strategies for reducing food waste have been attempted in your hospital? Which have succeeded, which have failed, and why?
  - What are the barriers to reducing food waste at your hospital?
  - What factors do you think would help reduce food waste?
Survey Results

• **4 broad issues/problems:**

  1. Meal ordering – unpredictability

  2. Portion size – variety – preferences

  3. Communication and training

  4. Constraints:
      • Quantification
      • Time and resources
      • Economic difficulties
      • Regulation – food donation
Best practices
Hvidovre Hospital (Denmark)

- 1,000 meals served/day

- **No data**

- **Food waste programme:**
  - Patients can choose from a menu card (menu à la carte) – the menu is different for the pediatric department
  - Ability to choose the quantity of the meal – just one small portion served initially
  - Kitchen staff serve meals to patients
    - ongoing dialogue with patients
  - Introduction of a strict date and inventory management
  - Attention to the aesthetics of the plates
  - Staggered closing by closing the canteens and cafeterias in stages, leftover food can be transferred to reduce the amount wasted.

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The University Hospital Complex of Santiago de Compostela (Spain)

• **1,300 meals/day**

• **2,5% of food waste** in regard to used food

• **Strategies into practice:**
  – Installation of a grinder/compactor
  – Flexibility to attend any request (8-22h)
  – Increase of variety
  – Reduction in the caliber of some fruits and the size of bread

• **In the future:**
  – Improving the communication with patients with the aid of TV or mobile phones
  – Exploring a partnership with diary companies
  – Target of achieving zero plastics
Freeman Hospital (UK)

- 750 meals/day

- **Average food waste: 6% annually**

- **Achievement:**
  - Installation of bio-digesters, which allow them to reduce costs for energy, water and landfilling - in £14,000
  - Control of their ordering system: 12 hours in advanced
  - Good communication between the kitchen and the ward
  - The provision of two different portions (elderly vs. general population)
Recomendations

- Know your suppliers and incorporate sustainable criteria in your PP
- Establish protected mealtimes
- Ensure patients can select different portion sizes
- Do satisfaction surveys to change menus, if needed
- Check your fridge
- Train your staff, also in terms on effective meal ordering, serving, customer care and adequate separation of waste
- Use transparent waste bins as a way to raise awareness between kitchen and ward staff on how much and what is discarded.
- Focus on prevention and explore some alternatives to redistribute surplus food
- Organise focus or work groups for testing different culinary innovations, consistencies or presentations
Thank you for your attention!

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