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Implications of Snacking on Nutrition and Quality of Life in Nursing Home Residents

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Why focus on snacks?

Food plays an important role in meeting biological, psychological, and social needs, but it is difficult for these needs to be met with current nursing home practices. Neglecting biological needs can lead to malnutrition, which increases mortality, morbidity, vulnerability to infection, and cost of healthcare, while residents' ability to complete activities of daily living and quality of life decreases (Bell et al., 2015; Russel, 2007; van Nie-Visser et al., 2015).

Currently, liquid nutritional supplements are used to combat malnutrition. However, studies have shown increasing access to a variety of foods and drinks treats malnutrition more effectively, demonstrating the potential benefits of snacking on foods (Simmons et al., 2010).

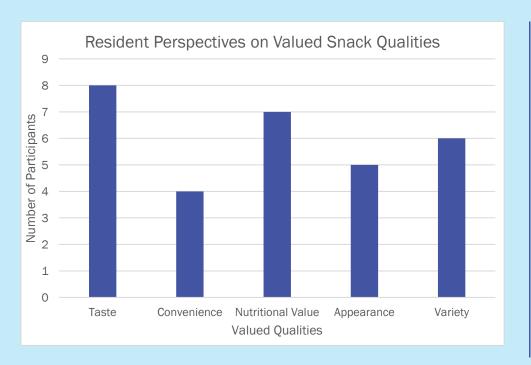
PROJECT FINDINGS

This project evaluated the perspectives of nursing home residents on preferred qualities in snacks and the accessibility of snacks in their facility to gain a better understanding of how to utilize snacks as an intervention. Overall, residents reported that they did not have access to snacks that matches their needs, preferences, and expectations for accessibility and availability.

While snacking preferences remained highly individualized, there was an overall consensus that variety, nutritional value, convenience, appearance, and taste were important qualities in residents' preferred snacks.

Increased snacking options, individualization, and person-centered care may lead to an increase in nutritional intake and quality of life for nursing home residents. These considerations are especially important for individuals with dysphagia as they are at an increased risk of malnutrition (Bannerman & McDermott, 2011).

Residents identified personal factors like dysphagia and institutional factors including inadequate staffing as barriers to obtaining their preferred snacks.



Barriers and Solutions to Implementing Individualized Snacks

Implications for Practice

While this project further reinforced the importance of person-centered care and individualization, further research is required to better understand how best to implement these themes. For individuals with dysphagia, individualization and person-centered

care are especially important as these individuals are often at an increased risk for malnutrition.

Barriers

- Lack of snacks available 24 hours a day
- Inadequate options on the snack cart that provides accessible snacks to the whole facility
- Need for additional funds or assistance to buy preferred snacks from store or bistro area
- Personal factors such as dysphagia
- Institutional factors such
 as inadequate staffing

Changes need to made at the institutional level, including the following described by the Pioneer Network (2011):

- Staff trainings on personcentered care
- Increasing resident choice
- Decreasing restrictive dining
- Promoting social interaction

Other considerations include allowing nursing to bring preferred snacks to residents and improving communication between providers, residents, and families (Milte et al., 2017).



Resident Perspective on Availability and Accessibility "Take someone who has dentures and has a stroke and has one hand. How easy is eating a whole apple?...Or an orange, here's a whole nice, beautiful orange, that's not peeled...even graham crackers. I mean, you try opening up that, those packages...It's problematic, so, so that snacks are not- even though they appear accessible, they are not accessible at all." (Participant 2)

Solutions

- Utilizing resident councils to increase residents' feeling of empowerment and amplifying their perspectives
- Offering 24-hour dining to increase access and availability to food
- Have nursing sit down with families to identify typical dining and snacking habits at home

References

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