

DHSV comment on the Healthy Choices: Draft Food and Drink Guidelines for Victorian Public Hospitals.

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Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV) supports the introduction of *Healthy Choices: Draft Food and Drink Guidelines for Victorian Public Hospitals*.

The Guidelines are a tangible commitment to, and demonstration of, the health-promoting role of hospitals. They reflect community expectations that hospital environments shall encourage, support, demonstrate, enable and promote healthy behaviours.

Potential enablers to the uptake of the guidelines

- The availability of Guidelines at a state level will enable uptake and demonstrates leadership in this area.
- The practical nature of the Guidelines and examples will act as an enabler to their application.
- Support and willingness of food providers and senior management will enhance uptake.

Potential barriers to the uptake of the guidelines

Cost

- Existing food supply outlets operating as businesses within the hospital settings may be reluctant to be involved because of the potential impact on profits. Developing a business case as to the benefits may assist with overcoming this barrier.
- Contracts with food providers will need to be negotiated with the Guidelines at the forefront of discussions.

Support

- Uptake of the Guidelines will require support from the hospital nutrition department or dietitian. For a food service provider to apply the Guidelines without support or without training may prove challenging. Some of the food examples outlined in each of the categories are quite broad and can be open to interpretation.

Implementation

- Implementation of the Guidelines will require commitment from both the food providers and the hospitals.

- The voluntary nature of the Guidelines may need to be firmed in the future to embed and sustain the initiative.
- There are challenges with applying the Guidelines to meals made of multiple ingredients. For example, page 33 looks at mixed meals, indicating that these dishes could be green, amber or red. This is not helpful for food suppliers when trying to apply the Guidelines. The comments and suggestions column does not always address some of the ingredients that are used in making these dishes.
- It will take time to understand all the complexities of the Guidelines. This may lead to limited uptake of the Guidelines or the uptake of only easy components.
- Less space for items such as soft drinks may lead to the need to restock these shelves more frequently. The labour involved may be a barrier to maintaining the 50/30/20 approach.

Other feedback

- It is important to differentiate between white/refined breads and wholegrain varieties. All are outlined in the green category but wholegrain varieties should be highlighted consistently throughout the Guidelines as a better choice. The differentiation is made with cereals in the Guidelines but not with breads.
- Consideration needs to be given to serving sizes for many green foods too.
- A summary sheet of the recommendations/categories and a flowchart of the implementation steps would be helpful.
- The pre-implementation assessment and regular monitoring will require dedicated resources. It is not clear whether these will be provided by the Department.

Application to The Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne

- There is a coffee shop located on the ground floor of The Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne, which offers meals, snacks, drinks and sugar free confectionery.
- The implementation of the Guidelines at The Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne will require commitment from both the food providers and the Hospital.

I consider that this initiative has the potential to enhance the overall capacity, confidence and credibility of Victorian hospitals to improve the health of the community and welcome the opportunity to provide this comment. I look forward to seeing the final Guidelines and their implementation.

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