

## Topic Area: Dietetic Practice and Education

### Abstract Title

Protected Meal Time implementation on an acute hospital unit: Addressing inpatient malnutrition

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** Protected Meal Times (PMT) was implemented on the acute Urban Health unit at St. Paul's Hospital for specified patients. PMT is patient-focused nursing care during meals for malnourished patients or those who require more care during meals. We would like to share our experiences with implementation, including quantitative audits and testimonies from patients and staff.

**Process or summary of content:** Audits on our unit showed that 90% of patients were interrupted 2 to 11 times during meals, and of those who were not fully independent, only half were given assistance to eat. PMT is used to address some environmental and organizational barriers for optimal intake in hospital.

**Systematic approach used, including supporting information:** The implementation of a ward-specific, individualized PMT was designed with input from interdisciplinary staff, and evaluated with audits and informal interviews with patients and staff. 75% of patients were put on PMT due to weight loss/severe malnutrition and/or poor intake, and the remainder due to dysphagia or increased care needs. 63% of patients who were on PMT had significant increase in intake and 67% who had history of severe weight loss regained 5-10% of their weight. Staff report full support of PMT and feel it improves outcomes. Patients reported positive outcomes and experiences with PMT.

**Conclusions:** Implementation of PMT requires nursing and dietetic leadership and support from staff to be successful. PMT can reduce the exacerbation of inpatient malnutrition, improve overall patient health outcomes and provide patient-centred care.

**Recommendations:** We encourage acute care dietitians to evaluate if PMT would work on their specific units and patient population. Joining quality assurance committees and completing pre-implementation audits can help gather support from interdisciplinary staff.

**Significance to the field of dietetics:** PMT has been shown to improve nutrition outcomes in an inpatient setting for patients struggling to maintain nutrition status.