

Saskatchewan Dietitians and Physician Attitudes on Diet Liberalization in Acute Care

Alexa Helson¹, Kaylee Thomson¹, Mat Leung¹, Martina Richmond², Sharon Walker², Stephanie Cook², Nadia Rodych²

¹Dietetic Practicum Student, Saskatchewan Health Authority ²Nutrition and Food Services, Saskatchewan Health Authority

Objectives: To determine the attitudes of Saskatchewan acute care dietitians and physicians with respect to liberalized diets.

Methods: Acute care dietitians and physicians across Saskatchewan were invited to participate in a 23-item validated online survey. The lead investigator sent the survey link to dietitians and the 12 Area Chiefs of Staff across the province with the request to distribute it to their physician teams. The survey data were analyzed by profession, years of practice, and geographic location.

Results: There were 111 respondents: 63.1% (n=70/111) were dietitians and 36.9% (n=41/111) were physicians. Rural South and Regina each represented 33.6% of respondents (n=37/111). There was equal representation from years of practice categories. Years of practice and geographical location did not significantly impact responses. When asked about diet liberalization, half (51.2%, n=21/41) of physicians and the majority of (94.6%, n=65/70) dietitians agreed that ‘... acute care hospital menus should be maximizing intake rather than restricting nutrients.’ When asked about specific foods there was disagreement between the professions. Physicians disagreed (53.7%, n=22/41) that ‘comfort foods ... should be available to all patients in hospital’, while dietitians agreed (68/6%, n=48/70) with the same statement. Physicians (70.0%, n=28/40) disagreed that ‘hospitalized patients with diabetes should be allowed to have foods that contain concentrated carbohydrate ...’ while 74.3% (n=52/70) dietitians agreed with the same statement. Both physicians (82.5%, n=33/40) and dietitians (60.0%, n=42/70) agreed with 2300mg as the menu planning goal for acute care.

Conclusions: The results demonstrated dietitians and physicians generally support diet liberalization as a theory. Physicians, however, were not in favour of liberalizing specific foods such as comfort foods. Sodium was one nutrient both professions were not in support of liberalizing. The results of this survey suggest that a disconnect exists between supporting diet liberalization while still wanting to restrict certain foods and nutrients.