Patient-Centered Room Service Style Meal Service

Cottage Health System | California | 2013

Problem
“Bland,” “assembly line food,” not fit for consumption,” “never served at a convenient time…” were typical comments from our patients regarding food service. Our “meals” scores from Press Ganey also reflected their sentiments, with an average ranking of 45% from 2009-2011. Internal audits revealed an inefficient traditional food service model that was wasteful, redundant, and most importantly, a consistent source of patient dissatisfaction. Various attempts at improving the process of service did not address the essence of limited food choice, low quality and little flexibility with meal service time.

Solution
Driven by Cottage Health System’s focus on “Patients First”, the nutrition department pushed the envelope of industry standards and re-imagined a food service model similar to that of room service in the luxury hotel industry, where each meal is individually prepared to order with top quality ingredients. To provide our patients with the best tasting and nutritious food in support of healing, we:

- Gave control to the patient to order meals based on their care plan schedule and preference.
- Began using organic ingredients sourced locally. NO CANNED FOOD.
- Implemented small batch cooking, each meal individually prepared, “a la minute” style, upon order by the patient.
- Committed to a maximum of 45 minutes from time of order to delivery.
- Styled food items artfully on the plate to complement the quality of the food served, appealing to the senses.
- Delivered meals restaurant-style by a group of highly-trained servers dressed in white shirt and black tie.

The positive response from patients is clear that quality food is a necessary “comfort” to their healing and recovery and that quality food is an integral part of healing, not an “afterthought” as with the traditional model.

Outcomes
Increased “meals” scores on the Press Ganey survey from a monthly average ranking of 45% between 2009-2011 to 83% during the first month of full implementation in Feb. 2012.

Sustained Press Ganey “meals” score monthly average of 95% or better from March 2012 to March 2013.

Decreased food waste by 25% (approx. 2000 fewer “wasted and uneaten” food trays per month).

Increased the quality of food (i.e. petit filet mignon, salmon, locally sourced organic produce, etc.) while reducing food cost by 12%.

Typical Patient Comments from 2013:
“Five star restaurant quality food.”

“The food is the most memorable part of my stay”

“Beautiful presentation, excellent food, delivered by a smiling face…better than the Ritz”

“Food was so good I felt like licking my plate!”

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