

The role of catering in hospitals in the UK and impact on the health of patients

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Biography:

Mabel Blades has completed a degree in Nutrition and Dietetics and became a Registered Dietitian and member of the British Dietetic Association. She then went on to do an MBA, MPhil and PhD as well as qualifications in teaching and food safety. An NHS dietetic service was managed for a number of years and now she works as a freelance dietitian doing training, writing, consultancy and advising patients. She edited Nutrition and Food Science for over 10 years plus has published papers in various journals and written books on nutrition, Glycaemic Index, GL and diabetes.

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Abstract

In the UK there are over 16 million patients admitted to hospital each year and all of these require food and fluids to improve their health and manage their condition.

Patients range from premature babies to elderly with such challenging conditions as dementia and all the different nutritional requirements that the life stages bring.

People are admitted to hospital for a variety of conditions where diet has an major impact for example approximately 1 million patients have had surgery of the digestive tract and 18% of inpatients have diabetes.

In addition patients have allergies and intolerances to foods and ingredients, some require different texture modifications due to dysphagia, others have various dietary requests for religious or ethical reasons plus people have very definite likes and dislikes.

Staff in hospital which includes over 150,000 doctors plus 320,000 nurses as well as managers, administrators and all the others involved in the running of a hospital require to eat. On top of that is the many visitors who often require food and beverages. Thus hospital catering also involves providing a service for staff and visitors.

The Hospital Caterer's Association (HCA) aims to continuously improve the catering in Hospitals and says "food is the best form of medicine". The HCA works closely with the British Dietetic Association.

