

Nutritional research helps improve care home menus

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Research on the menu - Simon Lawrence and Carole Marshall

Nutritional expertise at Northumbria University, Newcastle has helped enhance the menus of a prestigious care provider.

Hadrian Healthcare Group commissioned research by Carole Marshall, a registered nutritionist at Northumbria, to identify how their meals could provide improved nutrition and hydration for their residents.

Carole's recommended changes included replacing oils and butter, containing a high level of saturated fats, with polyunsaturated fats and oils and increasing the use of [oily fish](#). Oily fish is high in [omega-3 fatty acids](#), a natural anti-inflammatory which evidence shows helps to maintain a healthy heart and reduce the risk of heart disease. She also recommended using several low salt products whilst increasing the availability of the existing wide variety of fresh fruits to include juices, homemade lemonades and freshly made fruit and yoghurt smoothies.

The company's four seasonal menus now follow the new guidelines. Brochures based on Carole's report have been produced for each season to help residents and their families understand how meals are designed for health as well as being tasty and attractively presented.

Simon Lawrence, executive chef for Hadrian Healthcare Group approached Northumbria with the project in January 2013.

"We aim to provide the highest standard of care across the board and, naturally, part of that is helping people to live well through varied menus," said Simon.

"We wanted to create a new set of menus based on properly informed decisions about nutrition and hydration, so we needed to assess our existing choices. Armed with this information we have been able to redesign meals to be more effective for the health of our residents." Denise Stephenson, manager of Hadrian Healthcare Group's Wetherby

Manor care development, said:

"The new menus have been very well received by residents. There's a wide variety of food to suit every palate and it is available in forms to suit each resident. Very attractive presentation makes meals tempting to eat.

"We monitor residents' health and ask for their feedback on the menus so we can make individual changes according to their health needs and tastes."

Northumbria's Carole Marshall said: "People go into care for a reason often related to poor or failing health or a decreased ability to adequately care for themselves.

"Our report highlights the nutrients and vitamins most important in old age – such as vitamin D – and suggests areas where these key nutrients can be boosted in menus. These nutritionally-optimised menus can really improve the quality of life for residents.

"If the care homes are providing as near to perfect food as possible it makes a difference to the overall wellbeing of residents."

Simon Lawrence was chef of the year in the National Care Awards in 2010, Care Cook of the Year in the 2013 National Association of Care Catering (NACC) competition, and was recognised for excellence in care catering by the Worshipful Company of Cooks this year.

He organises the annual 'master chef' style competition for Hadrian Healthcare chefs. The focus for the next competition is innovation in pureed meals and soft diets. The finalists compete in a cook-off at Northumbria University in January, assessed by a judging panel including Carole Marshall and care catering industry specialists.

Provided by Northumbria University

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