Improving Patient Food Service Satisfaction in the Oncology Population

The Problem

The oncology population is a difficult one to feed. Many patients report minimal appetite secondary to medication and treatment side effects. Results have shown that this specific population scores low on the patient satisfaction survey. Nausea and minimal appetite make it difficult to engage in discussion regarding food which further makes it difficult to improve satisfaction. Also, weight loss is generally significant in these patients. With these factors in mind, the food service department decided to embark on a project centered around the patient's food experience – how can we improve interactions with this population, how can we better meet their needs, how can we improve their overall nutritional status?

Aim/Goal

1. Improve patient satisfaction by 5% in one quarter and long term goal of 12.5%
2. Increase patient nourishment intake
3. Increase patient interactions to include 95% of patient population

The Team

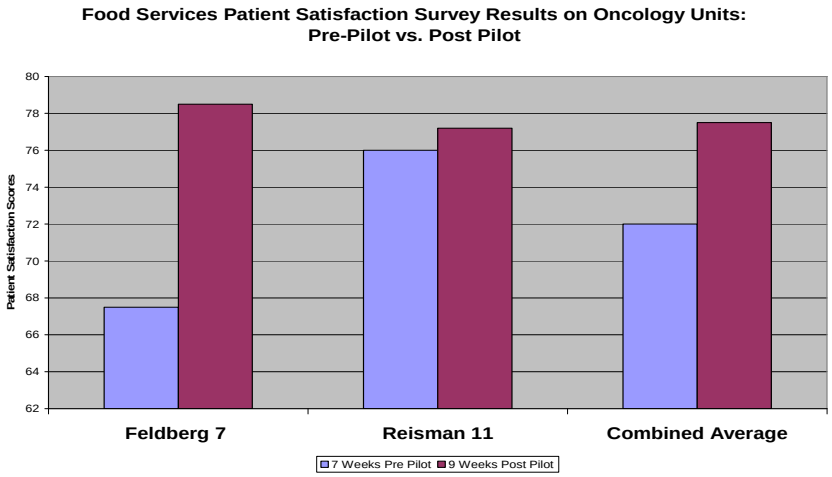
Patricia Samour MS RD, Director Clinical Nutrition
Allyn Roberts RD, Sodexo Food Services
Colin Targett, Sodexo Certified Executive Chef
Mitchell Lawson RD, Sodexo Senior Patient Services Manager Food Services
Christine Garabedian RN, Nurse Manager
Nora Blake, Sodexo Director Food Services
Donna Jones RD LDN, Sodexo Area Support Manager, Clinical Nutrition
Lori DeCosta RD, Clinical Nutrition
Michelle Mcgrory RN, Nurse Manager
Scott Berry, Food Services East Director

Patient Ambassador

The Interventions

- Formed focus group and partnership with Nursing, Clinical Nutrition and Sodexo Food Service to meet every eight weeks
- Analyzed current Patient Satisfaction scores and patient comments from Press Ganey Survey
- Brainstormed and identified patient interaction as conduit to increase patient satisfaction and nutritional intake
- Discussed side effects of medication/treatments that effect appetite – dry mouth, taste changes, nausea, bad taste in mouth during treatment
- Created and distributed assorted candy bags to increase patient appetite, aid in dry mouth and to mask negative taste of medications. Utilized as a tool to identify taste preferences ex. Sour. Implemented September 20, 2010
- Ambassador worked with Executive Chef to create individual meals specific to patient preferences, Implemented September 20, 2010

The Results/Progress to Date..



Lessons Learned

Patient interactions are a true driver of patient satisfaction. Increased patient interactions has further emphasized that each individual is unique and has specific preferences. This population, dealing with side effects of medication and treatment, has provided us with an opportunity to customize their dietary intake to help increase their nutritional status.

Next Steps/What Should Happen Next:

The focus group reconvened on January 5, 2011 and reviewed success of initial action plan. Through brainstorming and reviewing comments, the team determined that the next step is to implement additional menu offerings. This additional menu will be specific to oncology patients to help increase nutritional status. Our plan with the help of Nutrition Services is to begin a study monitoring intake of patients in the spring of 2011. To increase interactions Food Service is also partnering with nursing to attend rounds and increase awareness of the department to all patients. This increased awareness will be monitored through daily screenings to determine if we are interacting with greater then 95% of patients and we expect to begin monitoring this by our next meeting in March.

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