Spice Up Your Life: The Effect of No-Salt Seasoning Packets on Cardiac Units’ Meal Satisfaction

The Problem
Approximately 26.6 million individuals have been diagnosed with heart disease. In addition to clinical interventions, diet plays a major role in the treatment of this disease. A heart healthy diet is typically low in sodium, saturated fat, and cholesterol. Patients with heart disease are placed on this diet upon admission to BIDMC. However, a heart healthy taste palate is often found to be bland, especially if they do not otherwise eat similarly at home. This, in turn, affects patients’ perception of the food served and can lead to dissatisfaction with meals. Consequently, this affects Press Ganey scores especially on floors that are primarily on heart healthy diets.

Aim/Goal
1. Increase patient meal satisfaction and Press Ganey scores by 5% in 3 months on cardiac units that have a significant amount of patients on a heart healthy diet.
2. Provide continued education and cooking alternatives to encourage patients to continue to follow a heart healthy diet following discharge, hopefully helping the hospital initiative to decrease readmission rates.

The Team
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The Interventions
While utilizing patient rounding tool daily to gauge patient satisfaction and performing necessary service recovery, we distributed spice packets which include: two samples of no-salt seasonings, a pamphlet on how to incorporate spices into cooking at home, and a magnet that lists the ten basic herbs and spices. This provides a tangible gift for patients to take home with the goal that they will use the no-salt seasoning or use other herbs and spices rather than salt.

The Results/Progress to Date

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Lessons Learned
As exemplified above, Nursing scores consistently higher than most Support Services consistently throughout the country in Press Ganey. Many times the Nursing scores are drivers of the ancillary service experience, thus creating a “Halo Effect”. It is likely that this is a key indicator of the Farr 3 scores shown as the Food and Nursing scores ebb and flow together.

Contrarily, Farr 6 Food scores rose and stayed higher independently of the Nursing score, therefore casual correlations can be made with the spice packet. Of course there are a tremendous number of factors that contribute to the patient experience with meals which are always better identified with increased patient rounding, however we feel that the spice packet gives patients a better understanding of their diet restrictions and an action-oriented tool to utilize upon discharge.

It is difficult to measure whether or not patients actually use the packets when they are sent home as well as how this may or may not effect readmission rates.

Next Steps
- Expand spice packets to additional units
- Attend discharge meetings with patients and families to include spice packet in going-home information session
- Focus group between clinical and food service
- Monitor program to determine efficacy and make necessary changes
- Create and introduce a survey to be sent home to measure the use of the spice packets in their home life

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