**The Problem**

Undesirable food temperatures may not only adversely impact a patient’s experience and perception of the hospital’s food service system, it may also pose a risk to patient safety due to the potential for food borne illness.

Analysis of the hospital’s patient experience scores specific to nutrition services demonstrated that patients were dissatisfied with the temperature of the food they were served on their meal trays. Patients shared that hot food was often cold or cooled too quickly and that cold/frozen food was often melted or was too warm.

The hospital evaluated the problem and identified that its food delivery system did not effectively maintain desired food temperatures for its patients.

**Aim/Goal**

Demonstrate improvement in patient food temperatures, as evidenced by achieving and sustaining ≥ 95% compliance with standard temperatures set by Sodexo with a secondary aim of increasing patient experience scores related to food temperature by at least 5% by the end of the 1st Quarter of CY 2016.

**The Team**

- Michele Morgan, RD, LDN, Director of Food & Nutrition Services
- Shana Sporman, RD, LDN, BIDMC GM of Food & Nutrition Services, Sodexo
- Nora Blake, BIDMC System Director, Sodexo
- Christina Gaudet, RD, LDN, Clinical Nutrition Manager
- Rebecca Blair, MS, MTS, VP of Experience & Organizational Development

**The Interventions**

- Purchased and implemented *Aladdin Heat on Demand* system, including insulated dome plate covers
- Started using frozen bases and replaced all old plate covers, bases, mugs in December 2015
- Distributed tray tent cards introducing new plate system to patients
- Frequent rounding to collect patient feedback on food temperatures, real time trends identified and reviewed using Service Depot rounding tool
- Tray arrangement visual guide posted on tray line to improve tray presentation and ensure consistent use of new system

**The Results/Progress to Date**

Data was collected and compiled relative to patient food temperatures before and after implementation of the “Aladdin Heat on Demand System.” Food temperature targets were established based on benchmarks set by the hospital’s contracted food services vendor. As identified above, significant progress has been made relative to keeping hot food hot and cold food cold. Prior to the implementation of the new food system, only two of the five food/beverage types identified above achieved the desired target. After implementation, all five food/beverage types exceeded target.

**Lessons Learned**

- One of the most notable changes with the new plate system is the improvement of cold temperatures, such as milk. Putting cold bases in the freezer at least 60 minutes prior to mealtime is necessary to maintain ideal cold temperatures.
- While the new *Aladdin Heat on Demand* system has greatly improved temperatures, prompt delivery of trays is still an important factor in maintaining desirable temperatures.

**Next Steps**

- Identify whether the new food delivery system results in the desired 5% increase in the patient experience scores associated with improved food temperatures
- Continue to use Aladdin Heat On Demand system with cold bases
- Continue to monitor temperatures through weekly test trays
- Monitor results of direct patient feedback through meal rounds on Service Depot to identify issues early on
- Monitor meals per minute and staff efficiency

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