



Interprofessional collaboration at mealtimes in hospital: The need for cultural change

Ella Ottrey^{1,2}, Judi Porter^{1,3}, Catherine E. Huggins¹, Claire Palermo¹

1 Monash University, Department of Nutrition, Dietetics and Food, ella.ottrey@monash.edu

2 Eastern Health, Dietetics Department

3 Eastern Health, Allied Health Clinical Research Office

Background

Examination of interprofessional collaboration at mealtimes is needed to understand the culture of staff who work together to provide nutrition care in hospital.

Aim

This study explored the relationships, roles and responsibilities of staff involved at mealtimes and the impact on meal provision in hospital.

Methods

An ethnographic approach was employed on two hospital wards in Melbourne.

Sixty-seven hours of fieldwork were conducted. Observation and interviews (n=75) with 61 staff, volunteers and visitors were used to identify patterns in attitudes, intentions, behaviours and interactions at mealtimes.

Data were analysed inductively and thematically, supported by memo-writing and reflective journaling.

Results

Three key themes emerged to describe mealtime culture and reflect the interrelationships of staff involved in the delivery of nutrition care (Figure 1).

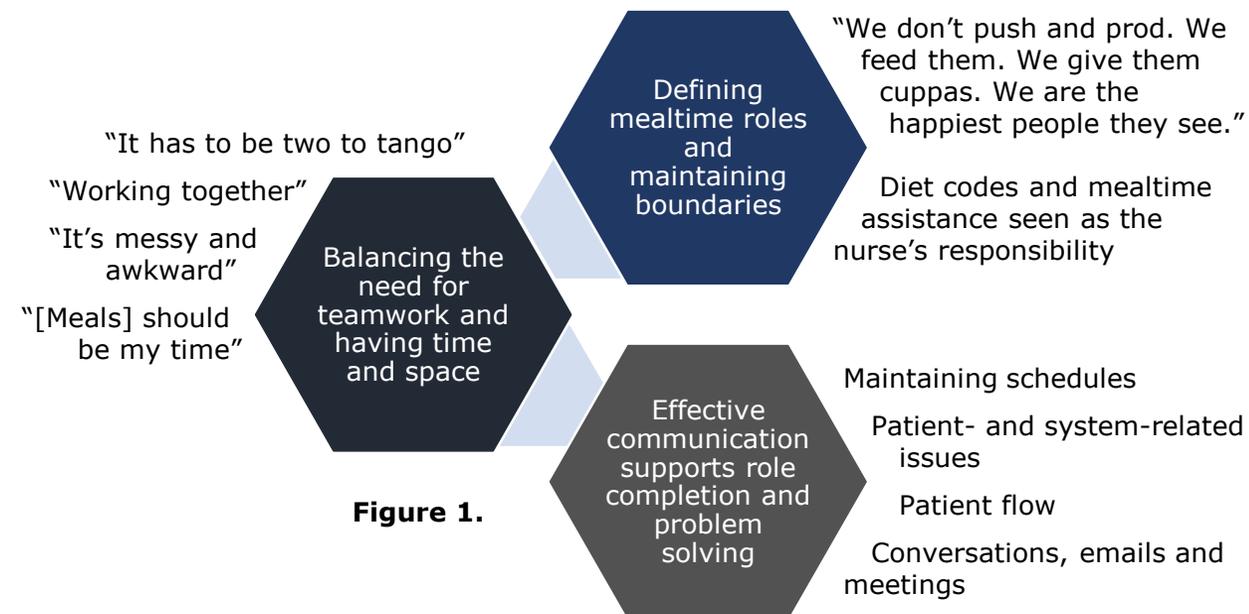
Staffs' working relationships were degraded by a lack of appreciation of workflow barriers and enablers, and conflict between wanting teamwork and segregation at mealtimes.

Significance of the findings to allied health

The findings suggest that a culture of interprofessional collaboration is yet to be achieved at mealtimes in hospital.

Staffs' awareness of their and others' mealtime roles and responsibilities is central to supporting a coordinated approach.

Healthcare organisations should reinforce the overall vision for quality patient care and shared goals to improve nutrition care.



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