

Diabetic Dietary Provision at HMP Ashfield

By Tierney Harris, Advanced Clinical Practitioner (Diabetic Lead)



Patient Feedback:

"There is a shared feeling amongst diabetes sufferers that there is not an adequate level of consideration being given to the provision of a diabetes-friendly menu"



"The options currently available do not seem to include important options such as brown rice, wholemeal pasta, wholemeal bread etc."

"There is clear medical direction from Healthcare that my health conditions (diabetes and hypertension) can be substantially improved by adopting a healthy diet. Unfortunately, this direction is based upon the assumption that the sufferer can access this"



"Only one vegetable option is offered and if you do not like it, that's just tough. One of the basic ideas is ensuring that dinner has larger portions of vegetables"

Overview

A trend was identified that diabetic service users felt dissatisfied with the dietary provision within the prison. In diabetic reviews, these patients would express their concern that the options available to them were not meeting the dietary advice they were receiving.

The prison service has a tight budget for providing meals for prisoners. Furthermore, meals need to be made and stored in batches, which can limit available options. The prison caters for various dietary needs such as vegetarianism, veganism and halal, but service users felt there was a lack of a healthy option.

Actions

As a result of these findings, I arranged a meeting with the Catering Manager to look through and discuss menu choices and options. We reviewed a month of menus and it was clear that carbohydrate options were white and there were no wholemeal options. Vegetables were limited and often repetitive, with a lack of variety. The Catering Manager highlighted that service users could choose the halal or vegetarian/vegan option if these are healthier, although it was not clear whether individuals knew this choice was available to them if it was not a dietary need.

I also sought advice from a Dietician, who reviewed the menus and agreed that the options looked "stodgy". It was suggested that portion size and the amount of desserts could be reviewed. The prison provides two desserts a day, and the Dietician suggested reducing this to two desserts a week and substituting some with healthier options, such as yogurt.

Patient Feedback

As the Diabetic Lead, I received a letter from patients, in which numerous views had been expressed (left).

Changes

The Catering Manager agreed that wholemeal options for carbohydrates would be trialled and bread products would be wholemeal, unless otherwise specified. They would also look to offer additional vegetables, with more choice. They are currently in the process of reviewing the desserts and what healthier substitutes could be offered. The Catering Manager explained that portion control is based on servings and that they would review the amount of carbohydrate being provided with each meal. Furthermore, an extensive survey is also being collated to review service users' views on the dietary provision.

Patient response

When feeding back the above to the individuals who initially raised the matter, they were pleased that not only had they been listened to but they had been a driver for change.

It certainly seems a difficult balance to ensure such a large population is provided for on such a tight budget, but diet and lifestyle can contribute both negatively on health - if poor - and positively on health - if good.

I look forward to a further meeting with our service users and the Catering Manager to assess the changes already made and to look at any additional suggestions to improve the dietary provision further.