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# Usability of Food and Beverage Packs in Hospital - Experiences from the Renal Ward

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## **Abstract**

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## Usability of Food and Beverage Packs in Hospital – Experiences from the Renal Ward

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### Abstract

This study explores the experience of the vulnerable renal patient with packaged food and beverages supplied in hospital food service. Previous studies have identified that food and beverage packs used in hospitals are problematic for older users - some packs unable to be opened and many rated as unsatisfactory. This observational cross sectional pilot study was conducted in the local regional hospital with 18 renal patients (aged 44-86 years; 84% aged 65 years and over) - a group of particularly vulnerable and regular hospital patients. Data collected included time taken to open packs, satisfaction ratings and comments on the packaging.

Eighteen different types of packaging were used in seven meals (5 lunches and 2 snacks). The most problematic packs for patients were the margarine tubes (maximum of 20 attempts and 126 seconds to access); as well as the salad pack (with a maximum of 18 attempts and 88 seconds). Some patients resorted to using their teeth or scissors to access the packs due to poorly designed openability. Patients undergoing haemodialysis treatment had particular difficulties with pack openability due to the restricted use of one arm.

The use of food and beverage packaging in hospital food service is an area that requires further examination to determine the optimal pack formats for these vulnerable users.

**Keywords:** food and beverage packaging; usability; hospital; older adults