Exploring the impact of two different food and beverage packaging conditions on the dietary intakes of older adults in a simulated hospital environment

Sarah Ryman  
*University of Wollongong, sjr659@uowmail.edu.au*

Alison F. Bell  
*University of Wollongong, abell@uow.edu.au*

Karen L. Walton  
*University of Wollongong, kwalton@uow.edu.au*

Emma Jenkins  
*University of Wollongong, ekj997@uowmail.edu.au*

Publication Details

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Abstract

Disciplines
Medicine and Health Sciences | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Details

This journal article is available at Research Online: http://ro.uow.edu.au/smhpapers/2781
Exploring the impact of two different food and beverage packaging conditions on the dietary intakes of older adults in a simulated hospital environment

SARAH RYMAN, ALISON BELL, KAREN WALTON, EMMA JENKINS
School of Medicine, University of Wollongong, NSW

This study aimed to determine the impact of food and beverage packaging on the dietary intakes of older adults. Malnutrition is a common issue in hospitals that can be often overlooked. In the literature food and beverage packaging has consistently been identified as negatively impacting dietary intakes of older inpatients. All 31 participants (aged 65 years and over) experienced two conditions which included unopened packaging and pre-opened packaging in the Nursing Simulation Laboratory at the University of Wollongong. A food waste audit was conducted, post meal questionnaire, meal time observations and malnutrition screening. Data were analysed through paired t-tests, independent t-tests and descriptive statistics using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). There was no significant difference in participants’ dietary intakes between the two packaging conditions. Cheese and biscuit packaging were found to be the most difficult to open. The average attempts to open the cheese packaging was 5.6 and took 28.5 s. The average attempts to open biscuits was 5.8 and took 16.4 s. It was found that there was a significant difference between malnutrition status and attempts to open cheese packaging. There was no significant difference in dietary intake, malnutrition status or gender. Although no statistical significant difference in dietary intakes was found, these results may reflect a clinically significant finding for a person who is malnourished. The study did find that some packaging was more difficult for participants’ to open and any barriers to dietary intake should be minimised to prevent malnutrition.

Funding source: Global Challenges and University International Collaboration Grants from the University of Wollongong supported this research

Contact author: Sarah Ryman – sjr659@uowmail.edu.au