

Serving Up Bush Tucker

Fiona Stanley Hospital

Demographic information

Fiona Stanley Hospital is a large public hospital located in Perth, Western Australia. It has 783 beds and offers acute, general and specialist medical and surgical services

GGHH agenda goals

- Food
- Purchasing

Case study summary

A bush tucker menu (food native to Australia eaten by Aboriginal people) was designed by Aboriginal stakeholders, resulting in an increase in patient satisfaction and more sustainable sourcing of ingredients.

The issue

Health services in Australia are encouraged to provide meal options which meet the cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Meals for Aboriginal patients were being sourced from a local pre-prepared meal provider, as opposed to being prepared fresh in house like other meals at the hospital. These meals were more expensive, arriving frozen, and made it difficult to meet the various needs of patients. In particular, many patients have difficulty swallowing, and need custom meals prepared for them.



Hospital goal

- Improve patient satisfaction
- Create a bush tucker menu to meet the cultural needs of Aboriginal patients

Sustainability strategy implemented

To create a bush tucker menu that could accommodate cultural, nutritional, and individual needs of patients, significant consultation with dietetics, speech pathologists, and local Aboriginal representatives took place. The decisions about meat, spices, cooking methods were all Aboriginal-led to ensure a bottom-up and empowerment-focused method design. Once a menu had been agreed to, it was only offered to Aboriginal patients. However, after seeing success and positive results from Aboriginal patients, bush tucker was made available to all patients for lunch and dinner.

Implementation process

The project team discussed with chefs and vendors to see what traditional ingredients (spices and meat) could be sourced. Special attention was paid to sourcing local foods from local suppliers. Consultations were held with Aboriginal officers, dietitians, and speech pathologists to discuss nutritional content, use of spices, and what types of kangaroo meat would be used. The next step was to organise taste testing sessions to receive feedback and ensure the foods were culturally appropriate. Following the taste testing, three dishes were created and used in an in-house trial. Each dish was rated by participants with the highest rated dishes to be selected for the menu. However, all the dishes were well received and, therefore, all placed on the menu.

While no specific training was required for staff, chefs at Fiona Stanley Hospital come from varying cultural backgrounds and some chefs had never cooked kangaroo meat before. Some guidance on how to cook kangaroo meat and its cultural significance to Aboriginal peoples was provided.

Tracking progress

The project was tracked monthly through the number of orders made.

Progress achieved

Approximately 40-60 bush tucker meals are ordered every month. In 2021, Fiona Stanley Hospital was awarded the WA Project of the Year Award Winner by The Institute of Hospitality in Healthcare in recognition of this initiative.

Challenges and lessons learned

One major challenge encountered in this project was time management and commitment. Many healthcare workers are extremely busy and if the project is not seen as a priority and something worth doing, then it will not be successful. Ensuring staff are given time to participate in the project is essential to a project's success.

Please note that the information in this case study was provided by the GGHH member named above. Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) is not responsible for the accuracy of the information/data provided.

Some further difficulties faced in this project was the inability to fully accommodate all requests. Damper (a type of bread cooked in the coals of a fire) is eaten with a majority of Aboriginal meals, but it is not possible to make damper in a hospital kitchen. In addition, due to the large number of allergies and diet types, trying to create a menu which can accommodate all potential patients' needs was somewhat difficult.

Fiona Stanley Hospital is well equipped with a large number of kitchen staff and resources, which greatly influenced the ability to undertake this project and ensure its positive outcome.

Next steps

There is no current plan to expand this project.

Links

<https://www.fionastanley.health.wa.gov.au/About-us/News/Freshly-prepared-kangaroo-debuts-on-hospital-menu>

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