Abstract

Introduction/aims: Satisfaction of inpatients with served food within a hospital care system still constitutes one of the main attempts to modernize food services. The impact of type of menu, food category, hospital centre and timetable on the meals wastage produced in different Spanish healthcare settings, was evaluated. Methods: Meal wastage was measured through a semiquantitative 5-point scale (“nothing on plate”; “¼ on plate”; “half on plate”; “¾ on plate” and ‘all on plate’). The study was carried out in two periods of three months each in 2010 and 2011. A trained person took charge of measuring plate waste classified into 726 servings belonging to 11 menus. In total 31,392 plates were served to 7,868 inpatients. A Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test (P < 0.05) was applied to evaluate significant differences among the variables studied. Results: The menus were satisfactorily consumed because more than 50% of the plates were classified as “nothing on plate”. Regarding food categories, 26.78% of the plates corresponded to soups and purées, while pasta and rice, and prepared foods were only distributed in 4-5% of the servings. Desserts were mostly consumed, while cooked vegetables were less accepted by the inpatients evaluated. Other factors such as hospital centre influenced plate waste (P < 0.05) but timetable did not (P > 0.05). Conclusion: Visual inspections of plate waste might be useful to optimize type and quality of menus served. The type of menu served and the food category could have a great influence on food acceptability by the inpatients studied.

Keywords