

Insufficient time for Nutrition Managers and Dietary staff in 17 Long Term Care Homes - 2008 Survey

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A recent survey completed by Barker, Blaggrave & Associates in 2008 in seventeen (17) Long-Term care Homes in Ontario has confirmed that unpaid time across Ontario is being provided by nutrition managers and dietary staff.

The study clearly indicates that dietary staff and nutrition managers are missing breaks and lunches, coming in fifteen to sixty minutes prior to shifts and staying late. The survey indicates in the seventeen homes as much as 140.75 hrs of unpaid time /week is worked by nutrition managers, equaling an estimated \$5,065.59. The survey also indicated that fourteen dietary staff came in early for shifts equaling 38.88 hours per week; the total amount of unpaid time for dietary staff was approximately 90.63 hours with a dollar value of \$1,711.09 per week over seventeen homes.

Recently the Ontario Society of Nutrition Management the Provincial Association for Nutrition Managers in Ontario also conducted a survey of Nutrition Managers in Long-Term care Facilities in Ontario. The study was driven by increasing concerns voiced by Nutrition Managers in Ontario; the data will be released in 2009.

The concerns voiced by Nutrition Managers in Ontario indicate a significant increase in time to ensure delivery of the nutritional services. The increase in frailty and acuity of residents require specialized therapeutic menus, interventions and follow up that take up extra time for Nutrition Managers and dietary staff. In the past few years the Ministry of Health has also increased expectations and citations for documentation of production in the kitchens, preparation of the menus and recipes by Nutrition Managers.

The Ministry of Health has also increased scrutiny of documentation expected for the observation and review of resident nutritional intake for quarterly reviews and any change of status. Nutrition Managers find the time required to provide quality management is not enough to meet customer service needs.

The Nutrition Manager spends a significant amount of time ensuring that Health and Safety of staff and clients is a primary responsibility and have requested for more hours from the Ministry of Health.

The survey from Barker, Blaggrave & Associates reports that staff believe the impact on resident meal services and resident clinical care of not providing the "unpaid time would be a negative affect on the quality of: meal service and information provided for the Registered Dietician to complete their work as well as unsafe conditions for staff and residents. Menus, food supplies and delivery would be impacted by increasing errors such as inadequate time to complete inventories resulting in food missing for menus and risk of food items being left on the shelf past expiry dates.

Of the seventeen homes surveyed, the report indicates that the greatest impact if this extra time was not worked would be the resident meal service and dietary staff unable to complete their work. The risks to staff and residents when dietary staff are unable to complete their work are: incorrect procedures for preparation, safe food handling, decreased cleanliness and safety in the kitchen and dining room for staff and residents.

In the past year the Ontario Society of Nutrition Management has submitted a request to the Minister of Health for an increase in time for Nutrition Managers and Dietary staff and awaits being invited back to the table to discuss dietary concerns in Long-Term Care Homes.