

Investigating the Ethical Dilemma of Food Waste in Long-Term Care Facilities

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Abstract

Food waste is an increasingly important consideration for all food-service providers. This research investigates the volume of food waste generated at two long-term care (LTC) facilities located in southern Ontario. Food waste was measured across all aspects of the food delivery system including preparation, production, and service. Results of the study show significant food waste of over 50% at both facilities. Investigation into the generation of this waste isolated the major cause being government policy ensuring patients at these facilities are offered various choices throughout the meal selection process. In addition, significant plate waste was generated because of additional policies guaranteeing pre-determined nutritional and caloric intakes for each patient. These findings put into question the operating practices involved with adhering to such policies. Ethical questions are also raised pitting a patient's "quality of life" improved by food choice versus the environmental impact of the waste generated because of this policy.

Keywords: Food waste, Long-term care, Quality of Life, Food-Service

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