



## Evaluating the Volunteer Meal Assistance Program (VMAP) at Western Health; A Positive Patient Experience.

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**Aim:** To determine patient experience and assess nutritional intake and plate wastage of patients receiving VMAP on select wards at Sunshine Hospital.

**Method:** Pre –post study design was used to evaluate energy, protein intake and plate wastage of patients' pre and post VMAP implementation during lunch time at Sunshine Hospital. Patient experience was also captured. Descriptive statistics were analysed using unpaired t tests and one way ANOVA. Thematic analysis was used to analyse patient experience. The project was approved by The Western Health low risk ethics panel.

**Results:** There was no significant difference in age ( $p=0.64$ ), gender ( $p=0.59$ ), MST score ( $p=0.99$ ), plate wastage ( $p=0.48$ ), energy ( $p=0.36$ ) or protein intake ( $p=0.46$ ) found pre/post VMAP implementation. 21 patients provided feedback on how VMAP made them feel which included happy (27%), supported (23%), safe (17%) and good (29%).

**Conclusions:** Pre/post study design, combined with the application of VMAP to lunch time only, posed limitations in determining the potential significance of VMAP on nutritional intake of hospitalised patients.

However given hospitalised patients frequently feel too sick to eat, find opening packaged hospital food difficult and often don't get help with their meals when needed, VMAP provides a supportive service to start to address these needs.

In addition VMAP appeared to impact on the overall patient experience and patient satisfaction, with feedback from all patients being positive and many of them enjoying the social aspects.

***"It's nice to know that if my family can't come in at lunch that there is someone who will help me" – Patient***

Areas identified for future focus include, improved identification of those eligible for VMAP, ensuring those patients who *need* assistance receive assistance and given volunteers are stretched for time, identification of patients who may be suitable for other support services such as communal dining.

**Significance of the findings to allied health:** Multidisciplinary involvement in implementing, evaluating and sustaining patient support programs can positively impact patient experience, broadening the role and reach of allied health clinicians.

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### Patient Experience survey (n=43)

**57 % received VMAP & reported the following;**

