

Food packaging improvement project – building access, boosting nutrition

Introduction

HealthShare NSW, which serves 22 million meals to patients in NSW hospitals annually, partnered with Arthritis Australia and Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI) to address the problem of hard to open food packaging, which is a major barrier to nutrition in hospitals and at home.

Key activities

Working together, the public-private partnership developed the world-first Initial Scientific Review (ISR), a packaging accessibility report that scores each product and identifies areas for improvement. This innovative accessibility assessment tool and supporting design guidelines drove major changes to industry in Australia and internationally; changed business models; rewarded manufacturers for innovating on consumer need; and transformed products for hospital and home use.

The project focused on improving nutrition in hospital and preventing the deterioration of health in the home. It provided the first single, national independent measure for food packaging. By making accessibility a procurement condition, HealthShare NSW supports the wellbeing of vulnerable patients, offers Australian small businesses an escape from price-only competition with multinationals and rewards patient-centric innovation.

Key achievements

The partnership has resulted in measurably improved ease of opening of menu items provided in NSW public hospitals and beyond, improving patient nutrition.

Improved menu items are now provided in NSW public hospitals and are increasingly available in aged care facilities and other hospitals with more are on the way.



Food Services and nursing staff report patients are more likely to attempt to open their own menu items, supporting patient dignity, and leading to more food being consumed.

This successful partnership between HealthShare NSW and Arthritis Australia has dramatically redesigned packaged food, ensuring NSW public hospital patients and people at home can access food more easily, increase the amount they eat, build nutrition and support good health outcomes.

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