To: Dr. Erika Paterson

From: Zoe Maika

Date: October 15, 2021

Subject: Proposal for reducing food waste at Mount Saint Joseph Hospital

**Introduction**

Hospitals are large producers of waste, a part of this being food waste coming from patient food services. Food waste occurs for a variety of reasons, whether it be an unpopular or inappropriate meal choice, poor inventory management, or lack of waste auditing. At Mount Saint Joseph Hospital, audit and inventory systems are in place, but the main issue lies in a lack of flexibility. Hospital patients receive three meals per day at set times: 8 AM, 12 PM, and 5 PM. A tray is prepared and delivered to each room with a meal based on a given patient’s dietary requirements. The problem with this system is that patients are often not hungry at the same time, so many trays return to the kitchen with little to no food eaten. Other than timing, there is also the possibility that a patient doesn’t like what is being offered for a given meal.

**The Problem**

High levels of food waste contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and cost the facility money. As mentioned, Mount Saint Joseph Hospital currently has several practices in place to reduce food waste. These include regular waste audits and a host or hostess who visits patients bedside to take their meal requests for the day. This system was implemented several years ago to give patients more choice in what they eat. The limitation with a host/hostess is that they are unable to visit every patient as some may be in surgery or in isolation, they visit once in the morning and so any patient admitted later in the day will be missed, and they do not work on weekends or holidays.

**Proposed Solution**

One possible solution is to provide a room service style of service, where a menu is provided to a patient upon admission and the patient can indicate exactly what they want on the menu for each meal. Their choice would then be communicated to the kitchen by calling the diet office and placing their order. For patients that are unable to communicate effectively, a family member or nurse can do so on their behalf. A patient would also have the option to forego a meal if they are not hungry, or choose a smaller portion size or snack option.

**Scope**

To determine if my proposed solution is feasible, I will be asking the following questions to guide the research:

* What are the major sources and causes of food waste?
* What systems are currently in place for assessing food waste?
* What changes have been implemented in the past to reduce food waste?
* Does Mount Saint Joseph Hospital patient food services have the resources to shift towards a more flexible meal experience?
* Is the possible increase in labour worth the savings in reduced food waste?

**Methods**

My primary source for data will come from conversations with Jessica Loyva, the General Manager of Food Services at Mount Saint Joseph Hospital. Although approval for change will go through many people, she is the one who has the power to initiate this change. I will also be assessing past audits and determining what processes are currently in place and what changes have occurred in the past to reduce food waste. Secondary sources will include research on other facilities and how they have reduced their food waste.

**My Qualifications**

I have worked as a food service supervisor at Mount Saint Joseph Hospital for over a year and have witnessed firsthand the food that is wasted after each meal. I am familiar with the workflow at the facility and have a good relationship with Jessica Loyva, allowing me to have access to past audits and food waste data. My studies in dietetics also provide me with an understanding of how food systems work and strategies we can use to improve efficiency and reduce waste.

**Conclusion**

Despite current systems in place, further action is needed to reduce food waste for the benefit of the environment and savings for the food service company. The lack of flexibility in hospital food service is a long-standing issue and there are steps that can be made to increase patient satisfaction. By addressing the questions mentioned earlier, I will determine the best and most realistic approach to reducing food waste at Mount Saint Joseph Hospital. I will proceed with your approval. Thank you.