‘Two dead frankfurts and a blob of sauce’: The serendipity of receiving nutrition and hydration in Australian residential aged care

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Girl Before a Mirror
Pablo Picasso 1932
Research Projects

• *The experience of residential aged care. Perspectives of carers and families* (Bernoth, 2010)

• *Stories from families/carers when accessing aged care services outside their rural and remote community* (Bernoth, Dietsch & Davies, 2012)

• Ethical approval from CSU, HREC (2010/011 and 2010/034)

• Forty-three indepth interviews across NSW, ACT, northern Victoria
Data analysis

• Integrated approach to thematic analysis:
  Narrative
  Content
  Discourse (Nagy, Mills, Waters & Birks, 2010)

• Member checking

• Themes identified by first and second authors individually and then cross-checked
Identified themes

• The dining room experience

• Quality of food

• Food hygiene

• Iatrogenic malnutrition and dehydration

• The ultimate insult
The Dining Room Experience
The Dining Room Experience

• ... very rare that they (care staff) were seen in the dining room because normally they disappear and you just can’t find a nurse (Participant 2)

• There isn’t anyone in there while they are eating their tea so if anything happened, there’s no one around (Participant 7)
The Dining Room Experience

... I got a phone call saying Mum had a fall out of her wheelchair sitting at the tea table. One of the residents saw it happen. She said ‘your Mother just pushed the wheelchair back, the brakes weren’t on’. She was yelling out to the girls outside; they were smoking. (Participant 2)
Physical impact of the fall
Physical impact of the fall
Physical impact of the fall
The Quality of the Food
The Quality of the Food

... he’s a self-funded retiree who’s paid $400,000 bond to be in there and they give him two dead frankfurts and a blob of sauce or two party pies for dinner! It’s pathetic

(Participant 11)
The Quality of the Food

• What do they get to eat? ... soup, watered down soup for tea and a sandwich, but the soup is always cold. I go and feed Mum and I have to heat up the soup. The lunch is alright, they get a hot lunch. (Participant 5)

• Like Dad, like if they brought their food to him, he’d sort of look at it and ‘Oh, bloody this again!’ and he wouldn’t eat it. We’d go down and buy take-away. (Participant 8)
The Quality of the Food

The food is shit, shit! One night a week they used to get two little half sausage rolls and a little container of tomato sauce and a small container of orange juice that you had to pull the lid off and that was dinner. ... she loved food. It was her only joy left in life, the taste of food. She was still tasting food ... she tried to eat something but there was never, never anything. She didn’t complain. (Participant 10)
Food Hygiene
Food Hygiene

This is one of the dirty kitchen drawers where they put their cutlery (Participant 2)
Food Hygiene

... and this is the state they leave Mum in

(Participant 2)
Food Hygiene

And then I noticed that the plates were dirty, always dirty. The tea cups had stains in them that were obviously there for a long time. And I watched them put out the dinners: the dinners were being put out on plates that were dirty with dried food from soup.

Sometimes they used the cups for soup and then sometimes they’d be for cups of tea. The morning and afternoon tea trolley would come around with dried soup on the cups. (Participant 9)
Iatrogenic Malnutrition and Dehydration
Iatrogenic Malnutrition and Dehydration

Betty was blind, she was sitting in the corner and they were coming and going, kitchen staff and carers. I never saw anyone go over to Betty. I was ready to go [home] after feeding Mum; it was an hour after tea time. I asked a nurse ‘Has Betty been fed yet?’. ‘Oh my God, I forgot her’.

Another night I asked about Betty, they brought a tray, put it on the end of the table and said ‘I’m going on me break’ and left the tray there. While I was there, she did not get her meal. (Participant 2)
Iatrogenic Malnutrition and Dehydration

Everybody’s so busy, they didn’t even feed her. Near the end she couldn’t feed herself anymore, she couldn’t see. She was being handed these tubs of fruit, you have to peel off the top piece of plastic; she couldn’t see it and she didn’t have the dexterity in her fingers. She should have been fed, probably for a long time, before we said ‘Can we?’ and we used to feed her ourselves when we were there.

(Participant 10)
Iatrogenic Malnutrition and Dehydration

They’d put water bottles on the table near their beds but the residents in bed couldn’t reach them and even if they could, they couldn’t get the tops off.

One family was going away for a week, they knew I visited Mum every day so they came and asked me if I would take the lid off their relative’s water bottle for them because they knew they couldn’t rely on the staff to do it. (Participant 9)
Iatrogenic Malnutrition and Dehydration

• The staff decided that they were too busy to do the afternoon and morning tea trolley so they stopped, just stopped. Management wasn’t even aware until we [relatives] spoke up. (Participant 6)

• They used to take Dad’s dinner tray to him and they’d leave it there for him to eat, and walk off. They’d come back and he hadn’t eaten so they take the tray away. (Participant 7)
The Ultimate Insult
The Ultimate Insult: Death by Malnutrition

Well, Dad ended up, part of his death certificate says ‘he died of malnutrition’; well, the doctor in intensive care, that’s what he wrote ...

Malnutrition (Participant 1)
Outcome of Complaints

• You think it’s all right ... but when you’re not here you don’t know what they (the care staff) become (cited in Bernoth, Dietsch, Burmeister & Schwartz, 2013)

• She came and abused me after you left, you got no idea what she said to me. They get me in the shower and they hurt me ... they were that rough (cited in Bernoth, Dietsch, Burmeister & Schwartz, 2013)
Discussion

• The serendipity of getting food and fluids
• Role of dieticians
• Standards monitoring
• Clinical supervision of care staff
• Standard of education of care staff
• Handling complaints
References


http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.colegn.2013.02.001