



## **INNOVATIVE IMPROVEMENT TO FOOD SERVICES FOR PATIENTS WITH ALLERGIES**

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### **Abstract:**

We have been confronted in recent years by a growing need to make sure that Paediatric patients with food allergies are not put at risk while in our hospital. The occurrence of parents with children with food allergies has also increased, increasing questions about the possible risks and availability of an adequate diet. **Aim:** The aim of this initiative is to improve the identification and non-medical management of paediatric patients at risk of anaphylaxis due to food allergies, therefore optimising their outcomes and experiences. **Objective:** The objective of this initiative is to provide patients with a cost effective, healthy, nutritious, allergic free meal service that meets and exceeds the needs and expectations of our patients. **Methodology:** Survey was undertaken by our team from Oct 2019 to Feb 2019 through a dual sampling approach and based on non probability sample. Expert panel review and key informant cognitive interviews were conducted. **Result:** The strategies implemented as a result of the work of this group have led to a reduction in the number of food allergy related incidents, increased confidence among parents that we can provide appropriate food for their children, and greater awareness among staff members of patients with food allergies and how we can better care for these patients. **Conclusion:** The strategies put in place as a result of this group's work have resulted in a reduction in the number of food allergy-related incidents, increased confidence among parents that we can provide adequate food for their children, and increased awareness among staff members of food allergy patients and how we can better care for these patients.

**Key Words:** Food Allergy, Innovative Of Food Service, Children Food Allergy

### **Introduction:**

There are ample numbers of near misses involving children receiving food they were allergic to or children not being correctly identified as having a food allergy. A parent of a child with multiple food allergies also raised serious concerns regarding their child's identification with a food allergy and the availability of an appropriate diet. We responded to this need for person centered care by setting up a multidisciplinary food allergy working party to review procedures to classify and treat paediatric patients at risk of anaphylaxis as a result of food allergies and to define risk mitigation strategies. This group includes a parent of a child with anaphylaxis, Allergists, a food service manager, a dietician, members of safety and risk management committee and staff of the Paediatric Nursing ward and Emergency Department who ably conducted both a comprehensive review of food allergy incidents and a process of identifying risk areas from the Emergency Department's presentation to the wards admission.

### **Methodology:**

A 5 months retrospective and prospective study design is used. The main outcome measures are the number of food allergies reaction and near misses reported. A total of 65 incidences were collected through various methods over the period from October 2019 to February 2020. The data were defined and collected using standardized methods. This has been approved by the Expert committee. There were no modifications or changes in wording in all items so as to maintain the meaning of the content. Demographic data about the participants including age, gender, educational attainment, profession, length of service, and department were also collected. Data was distributed and retrieved by hand, not by electronic means.

### **Result:**

The work undertaken by the food allergy working party has led to key outcomes:

- Implementation of food allergy procedures which follow the patient's journey
- Development of a food allergy menu and meals which cater for children with allergies to one or more of the nine major allergens.
- Heightened awareness and understanding of food allergies and their incidence; non-medical management of food allergies and the provision of safe food.
- The risk reduction strategies introduced have also led to a reduction in the number of food allergy related incidents.

In consideration of the need to better serve the needs of clients and in line with our goal of patient centre care, a working group was set up with members from the three most important areas to ensure the provision of sufficient food to paediatric patients, paediatric wards and central kitchen and food service departments on site. Furthermore, this initiative provides parents of children with a food allergy with confidence that our hospital can provide an appropriate meal for their child.

**Discussion:**

The introduction of the risk reduction strategies provides parents of children with food allergies with confidence that we can identify children with one or more food allergies and provides them with appropriate meals. Reviews of food allergy incidences and compliance with the food allergy procedures are carried out every six months. The rollout of the food allergy procedure and menu was supported by an extensive education program for volunteers, nursing and food service staff. Various risk reduction measures are taken to address this issue such as

- Allergy identification checklist prepared and implemented
- Do's and don'ts signage are displayed across the hospital
- Practice changes like food items are banned in the play areas in OPD & IPD
- Initial assessment form is revised and includes allergy related information
- List of food-drug interaction developed
- Food allergy menu prepared
- Consumers were now being engaged in all processes of menu review resulting in increasing the quantity of ethnic foods
- Detail information for each recipe are providing to the user
- Allergy free meals are in place
- Allergy testing on dishes undertaken
- Patient and family education on allergic information strengthened

**Limitation:**

This study has several limitations that should be addressed. Availability of a larger sample of healthcare organization could improve the study further. Another limitation of this study is the exclusion of adult patients from the study. It would be very helpful if adult patients are also being included in this quality improvement project.

**Conclusion:**

This groundbreaking initiative stemmed from our front line staffs willingness to respond to the needs of our patients and their families and to provide outstanding care to a high-risk paediatric patient population and maximizing the goal of achieving outstanding results for our patients. The working group on food allergy was thinking beyond the box and was working tirelessly to achieve an enhanced process which has led to increased visibility and visibility compliance with the newly developed practices and procedure. It has resulted in a wonderful food allergy menu being formulated, with fresh, simpler labelling. In addition, many nearby other hospitals expressed interest in providing the meals free of allergies.

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