

# Patient Nutrition Care Service

Caramelized salmon. Roasted polenta. Grilled petite steak. For dessert: lemon sorbet, coconut cream pie, or cheesecake. All served on china, with silverware rolled in a linen napkin, and personally delivered in less than 30 minutes. Although it sounds like room service in a fine hotel, this is what patients can expect from the Patient Nutrition Care Service at Huntsman Cancer Institute (HCI).

In a major improvement from notorious hospital food of old, inpatients at Huntsman Cancer Hospital (HCH) order “room service” 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day. The Point Bistro, a dining establishment on the sixth floor of HCH open to employees and the public, also offers guests of inpatients free continental breakfast from 8 to 10 a.m. during the week.

Brandon Howard, director of operations for all food service areas at HCI, is the visionary behind the concept. Howard designed the patient care kitchen and the Bistro restaurant. He also developed the menu and recipes for the unique operation. He continues to oversee the service.

Carissa Christensen, MPH, registered dietitian and manager of the Patient Nutrition Care Service, was a public health officer in the Air Force specializing in food safety. In 2007, she accepted the newly created manager position. Her job is to make sure food is safe and patients

are satisfied. To do so, she works very closely with Luke Grealish, executive chef, and the other dietitians at HCI. The team also works with doctors, nurses, and clinic staff at HCH as well as the University of Utah Hospitals and Clinics. Patients may travel back and forth from units at University Hospital and HCH, so teams stay in close contact, making the continuity of care for patient seamless and personalized.

Anissa Kleemeyer is among the dietitians on HCI’s Patient Nutrition Care Service team. “Dietitians make sure menus are appropriate for our patients and follow their medical needs,” she says. Since dietitians see inpatients daily, they know how patients are doing, note nutrition requirements, and find out what foods patients like to eat. They report this information back to Christensen in the kitchen. “It’s very important for us to work together as a team,” Kleemeyer says.

Using state-of-the-art computer software called CBORD, data is entered into an intricate system that tracks, analyzes, and organizes food-related information. A patient’s specific data can include everything from food allergies to clinical notes, daily menu plans to preferences for decaffeinated coffee. “It’s another way HCI patients receive personalized care,” Kleemeyer says, “and it’s an incredible tool for patient safety.”

It’s no wonder the HCI Nutrition Care Service patient satisfaction scores have been in the 90th

percentile every year since the hospital first opened. The most recent 2007 rating was in the 97th percentile.

For people with cancer who may be very sick and have compromised immune systems, food safety and nutrition are critical aspects of quality care—and it’s personal for Kleemeyer. “There is a lot of cancer in my family,” she says, including her mother and her uncle. Even she was diagnosed with skin cancer and treated at HCI. “I am proud to say I am also a patient here. It makes me passionate about my patients, about my job, and about this facility.”



*Inpatients at Huntsman Cancer Hospital receive food services more in line with a fine hotel than typical hospital fare.*