

Presentation

The editorial board of Demetra, in partnership with the General Coordination on Food and Nutrition of the Ministry of Health (CGAN / MS) and with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), presents the thematic supplement on “Attention to special dietary needs in SUS (Unified Health System)”. This present issue aims to qualify the debate on the progress and needs of this field for nutritional care in SUS, on the three spheres of government, in the perspectives of management, assistance and the users of the system, besides supporting the dissemination of service experiences and research results, thereby increasing the availability of information on this topic.

The National Policy on Food and Nutrition (PNAN), in its version published in 2011, presents as a prime directive the “Organization of nutritional care”, which, supported by the other guidelines, has contributed to the achievement of the “Cooperation and articulation to food and nutrition security” in all spheres of management in SUS, and in every assistance unit from the Health Care Network. This Policy defines special dietary needs as: *food needs, whether restrictive or additional, of individuals with metabolic or physiological alterations that may cause*

temporary or permanent changes in the biological use of nutrients or to the means of food consumption (enteral or parenteral).

Due to the expanded nutritional assistance in SUS, this collaboration deals with issues that range from nursing practices up to discussions on legal demands, which have increasingly become a frequent reality for all managers of SUS, going beyond the perspectives of a group of users and new strategies of teaching. Thus, it is one of the strategies included on the efforts of CGAN/MS in the scenario of the guideline “Research, Innovation and Knowledge in Food and Nutrition” of PNAN, contributing so that managers and professionals can build solid bases of evidences to support the planning and decision making with regard to care provided to people with some kind of special dietary need.

The current nutritional situation in Brazil, which encompasses different types of malnutrition, including malnutrition, specific nutritional shortages, obesity, and other chronic non-transmissible diseases related to food and nutrition, makes the organization and provision of care more complex and challenging. Other aspects also sum up to this situation, for instance, the expansion of the elderly population and the increased victims of car accidents and violence, which can result in clinical changes that end up generating special dietary needs for such individuals.

Such scenario has demanded from the Ministry of Health and the City and State Health Secretariats the development of strategies for the organization and qualification of health assistance for people with special dietary needs. This issue from Demetra is proposed to be a benchmark in the discussion of this matter, besides encouraging new publications, debates, scientific research, and spread of knowledge and practices, to increase the scope of reference that approach several dimensions of this matter for SUS.

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