

## Cultural Issues

### PERFORMING THE BEDRIDDEN PATIENT'S NUTRITION

The main general principle in feeding the bedridden patient is that the patient must eat well. He or she needs nutritious food in order to stay alive, to fight infection and to replace lost nutrients. Lack of appetite leads to a weakening of the immune system.

Malnutrition aggravates infections. Lack of liquids results in dehydration.

Food restores physical and mental balance.

In France and Switzerland (Vincent tells us), the hospital lets the patient decide whether or not to eat hospital food. Meals are, typically, frozen. That is why the hospital encourages patients to engage with dieticians in order to eat what is recommended for their disease. Great attention and freedom is granted in supplying the adequate diet medically recommended, as patients are considered to be fully aware and capable of managing their disease and diet for the own good.

In Congo, nutrition is based on local produce, like in other African states. Money comes first and only rich people are hospitalized. They pay for their own meals and there are no nutritionists. Physicians make the dietary recommendations. For instance, in arterial hypertension, a salt free diet is recommended but the patient does not have to observe it. The hospital provides a certain meal which the patient may accept or not, in which case the family will bring food from outside the hospital. It is worth mentioning that holy water is also a remedy preferred by most Congolese.

Lalia, a student from France originally from Guadalupe, tells us that hospitals in this part of the world offer locally sourced meals based on bread, fruit and vegetables. Hospital food does not contain any imported goods.

Syria, presently ravaged by war, does not provide meals for patients. Before the conflict, hospitals did offer locally sourced, poor quality meals to patients. Nowadays, it is the families who must bring the food for the patients.

In Algeria, dieticians are the ones exclusively in charge with hospital food. The meals are based on vegetables, fruit and legumes (beans and lint). Bread is included and fruit is served dried. Means in nonexistent in the hospital because it is too expensive.

#### Topics for Forum:

- Have you noticed any differences in the hospital food depending on a people's culture?
- Is it important that the patient like the food? Why?



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- Can you comment on the way patients eat depending on certain religious celebrations such as the Fasting in the Orthodox and Catholic religion or the Ramadan for Muslims?