



HOW TSEBO REVOLUTIONISED HOSPITAL MENUS TO REDUCE COSTS DURING A PANDEMIC, WHILE IMPROVING PATIENT SATISFACTION



INTRODUCTION

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, President Cyril Ramaphosa declared a National State of Disaster. The effect on the private healthcare industry was dramatic, not only to prepare the healthcare sector for its response on how to manage the pandemic, but also in terms of the day-to-day business of hospitals. Fedics, a Tsebo Solution with nearly 50 years experience in the catering industry, and a longstanding relationship with healthcare clients, was approached to assist customers with some of the challenges that arose as a result of the pandemic.

CHALLENGE

With fewer paying patients, Tsebo's healthcare clients needed to implement cost savings that would improve efficiencies without adversely affecting patients' comfort, nutrition and care. They asked Fedics to re-evaluate their catering offerings. Also, to implement cost savings across staffing, water and energy use, cutlery, crockery, cleaning equipment and chemicals. A major priority was reduction of food waste and time spent on catering activities.

Good, tasty and nutritious food not only makes patients feel better, but also helps them heal faster. An important prerequisite was that patients should still receive the correct nutrition, therapeutic diets and high-quality food. In addition, Fedics needed to maintain its rigorous operational health, safety and quality control systems and standards.

Reduction in occupancy

One of Tsebo's key private hospital groups, and a Tsebo Solutions Group client of over 25 years, **saw occupancy drop by between 25% to 50% across its hospitals nationally** as doctors and surgeons reduced their elective surgery hours. Emergency services also experienced fewer cases, and individuals avoided hospitals for fear of contracting the virus.

SOLUTION

As a first phase Fedics conducted **a waste study across its clients' hospitals**. This was done to measure the average amount of plate waste generated per facility and to determine which products were unpopular or were provided in quantities that exceeded patients' needs.

A **customer survey** was designed and implemented. Their responses were collated to determine patients' regular household eating habits, food preferences and their expectations of food provided while in hospital.

Armed with the results of the survey and the waste study **a team of operational managers, executive chefs and registered dietitians** reworked the menu to see **where waste could be minimised, while maintaining optimal nutrition per patient**.

Findings revealed that an average of **37% food was wasted** by patients across the hospital group. International studies echoed this and showed that in hospitals an average of **36% of lunches** is wasted, and **30% of supper** meals.

Separate **3-star, 4-star and 5-star menus** were created to cater for the **different eating patterns and cultural tastes of various South Africans**. The new meal offerings were designed to mimic **a more natural eating pattern based on how patients might eat at home**.

Starters and desserts were removed (apart from Sundays when a traditional 'Sunday Lunch' is served). Menu options were restricted to only two choices, both including an animal-based or plant-based protein. The beverage service was adapted to suit the new menus. Snacks were limited to early mornings and bedtimes. Water or herb infused water, home-made ice tea, and fruit were offered with meals and at regular intervals throughout the day to maintain patients' hydration.

An award-winning 126-bed hospital in Klerksdorp was selected as a test site to roll out the new menus and to gauge patients' responses to the new meal plan.

“

Love the garnishing of food. You can compete with the best hotels in South Africa.

”



“

Thank you for everyone making my stay so comfortable while in hospital during this difficult time. Loving the food.

”

BENEFITS

The new menus were introduced within seven days. **The benefits could be seen within two weeks:**

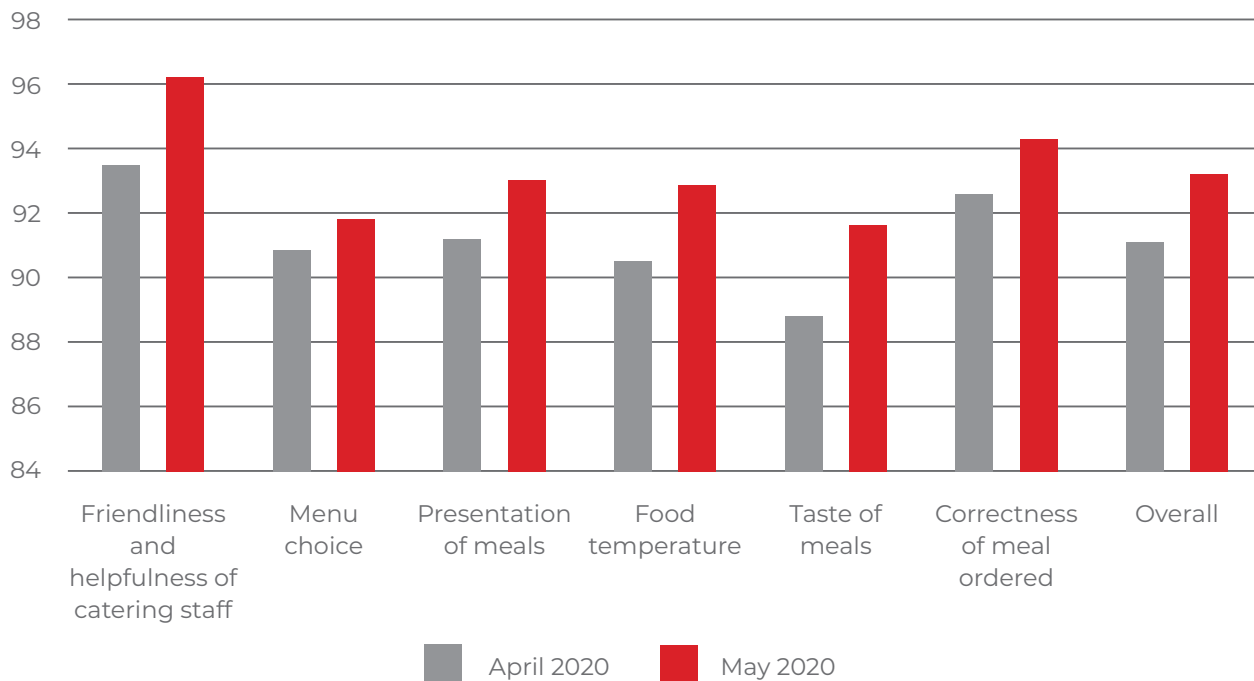
- Fewer complaints about food quality
- Fewer complaints about incorrect food delivery
- Decrease in stock holdings means fewer losses as a result of shrinkage or expiry
- Significant reduction in waste saves money and is good for the environment
- Improved energy efficiency as fewer options reduce the amount of electricity needed for cooking and less water and power is needed to run the dishwashers
- Fewer staff to prepare, serve and clean up after meals, making it easier to comply with social distancing and other COVID-19 safety regulations to prevent the spread of the virus
- Less cutlery and crockery, and fewer packaged products to purchase
- Reducing the protein options lowers the risk of bacterial cross-contamination
- Fewer menu options provide more opportunity to include fresh food items to increase nutritional value, and it supports local suppliers
- Reduced plate waste
- Patients can order additional food if they wish, or need it

OUTCOME

By putting aside outdated notions of what a hospital meal should look like and adopting more natural menu options that adequately satisfied taste and nutritional requirements, Fedics was able to not only **reduce the price per plate, but also improved the nutritional value of the hospital's meal offerings.**

Patient satisfaction increased overall from 91.16% to 93.07% within a two-month period

Patient Satisfaction Scores



Less waste, more nutrition

The nutritional content of the test hospital's menu was analysed through an electronic nutrient analysis programme to determine the kilojoule value. The previous menu provided 10 048 kilojoules, 37% of meals were wasted, in effect only providing 6 430 kilojoules per patient – below the energy requirement for hospital patients. The new menu provides 7 330 kilojoules energy with 255 grams carbohydrates, 86 grams protein and 68 grams fat - **in line with calorie and protein needs for patients with medical conditions, and necessary for optimal wound healing.**

GET IN TOUCH

+27 (0)11 441 5300 | info@tsebo.com
www.tsebo.com

