Meals served in Danish nursing homes and to meals-on-wheels clients may not offer nutritionally adequate choices

Underweight is a significant problem among older Danish nursing home residents and home-care clients. The aim of this study was to evaluate the nutritional composition of the meals prepared for older adults in nursing homes and receiving Meals-on-Wheels deliveries, focusing on the menus most commonly served, including the standard menu (most commonly prepared), the energy and protein dense menu, and two types of texture modified menus (chopped and blended). Also, one portion of a homemade energy and protein dense drink was collected and analyzed. For each of the participating kitchens (N = 10), extra portions of different menus were made (3 days in a row). The meal samples (total n = 389) were analyzed for content of energy, protein, fat and carbohydrate. The findings were compared with recommendations regarding the foods to be served in Danish institutions. The nutrient content of the meals-on-wheels and nursing home meals, as well as that of the homemade energy and protein dense drink, varied considerably. The nursing home menus seldom or never fulfilled the recommendations. Our findings support the conclusion that meals served in Danish nursing homes and to meals-on-wheels clients do not consistently offer adequate nutritional intakes.

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