

Supporting healthy dietary choices for people working night shift: Considering the workplace dietary culture

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Background

Compared to day workers, shift workers are at higher risk of many diet-related conditions including gastrointestinal, metabolic and cardiovascular disorders (1,2,3,4,5.) Factors, such as unpredictable breaks and limited access to healthy options, influence shift worker's dietary choices (6,7). We used focus groups to understand beliefs and practices around dietary choices and working night shift. The results were presented to a group of night shift workers at a workshop to elicit staff's suggestions for improving healthy dietary choices as part of a co-design process.

Focus group results

Participants (n=30; RNs = 70%) worked mixed/rotating night shift (73%) and average age was 37.5 years (range 22 -71 years).

Thematic analysis identified three main themes:

- **Setting:** the factors that shape the dietary environment for night shift staff
- **Skills and beliefs:** what people know and believe about eating/drinking during night shift
- **Shared meaning:** the shared expectations, norms and understandings of eating/drinking during night shift.

Workshop results

Participants (n=29; RNs=62%) identified 46 possible changes to support healthier dietary choices at work. Options were rated by staff (n=14) on a 5 point scale (5, the change they most wanted to see). Interventions to support healthy dietary choices for night staff with the highest mean scores were:



Access to fresh food options



Protected breaks



Access to healthier snacks



Extended café hours

References

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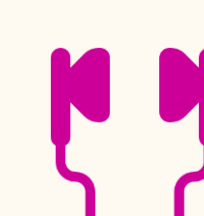


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Implications

Healthy dietary choices are important to night shift staff.

The safety precautions and restrictions imposed by the current COVID 19 pandemic has meant the interventions focusing on improving availability and access to fresh food from hospital retail outlets, structuring meal breaks to encourage social connection, and educational opportunities to support wellbeing and healthier food choices during night shift have been paused.



Digital media options addressing education are under development with the view to be rolled out as an alternative to face to face education.

Consumer Engagement

For more information on this project, contact Renee.Clapham@bhs.org.au



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