

Dietician Marion Turner says —

Scientifically prepared meals important in patient care

One doesn't go to the hospital because of the food served.

Meals are, however, an important part of the treatment process. Poor nutrition may have been one of the contributing factors why the person is in the hospital.

Feeding of patients is only one of several nutrition programs carried out at Hills and Dales General Hospital,

according to registered dietician Bonnie Johnson.

There are diet classes for diabetics, individual diet counseling, the new WOW Club (Weight Off Wisely) for hospital employees seeking to lose weight, and the Meals on Wheels Program, for which the hospital prepares the meals.

Mrs. Johnson is a member of the American Dietetic

Association, which has designated March as National Nutrition Month in order to focus attention on what she says are "the benefits of good nutrition in maintaining healthy living."

Mrs. Johnson, a Caro resident, works under contract with Hills and Dales and is there one day a week, on Mondays or Tuesdays. She works on the same basis at

Caro Community, Scheurer Hospital in Pigeon, Fisher Convalescent Home in Mayville and the Thumb Commission on Aging.

As a college-trained dietician, her role at Hills and Dales is primarily advisory, plus she teaches the diet class for diabetics, gives in-service training to hospital staff and counsels patients needing dietary advice.

THE FULL-TIME DIETARY assistant supervisor at the hospital is Isabelle Seeley, a certified dietetic assistant.

Her primary task is overseeing the kitchen operation, including ordering of the food. For the current fiscal year, which ends March 30, Hills and Dales has budgeted \$74,560 for food.

The total budget, which includes the salaries of 14 full and part-time employees, plus Mrs. Johnson, is \$192,042.

The task of running the food program is complex because there are so many different types of meals that must be served, depending on the needs of the patients.

For any given meal, Mrs. Seeley said, an average of 12 different diets must be accommodated, such as full liquid, semi-liquid, soft, bland, caloric restricted, fiber restricted, ulcer management, fat restricted.

In January, the hospital kitchen workers prepared 6,226 meals, consisting of regular diets, 764; special diets, 2,153; nourishments (snacks), 313; employees, 2,678; guests, 173; and Meals-on-Wheels, 145.

The basic menu is repeated every three weeks (the average patient stay is less than that) and major changes are made quarterly, for instance, more fresh fruit in summer and more soup and meat and potatoes in winter.

"The food here is really outstanding," Mrs. Johnson said. "We get very few complaints."

When a patient is introduced to a new diet in the hospital that has to be continued once he or she goes home, for instance, because of an ulcer, it is the task of Mrs. Seeley or one of her diet clerks, or sometimes, Mrs. Johnson, to advise the patient and family about his or her dietary needs after leaving the hospital.

Mrs. Johnson teaches the class for diabetics, held from 1-3 p.m. the first Monday of each month in the basement meeting room.

It is for new diabetics or old ones who are having trouble with their diets, such as by gaining weight.

The Meals-on-Wheels program is run entirely by volunteers, for persons recently released from the hospital but still unable to prepare their own meals or in need of a special diet, or who otherwise have difficulty in preparing their own meals.

The hospital prepares the hot meals, which are delivered at lunch time. As of about a month ago, there were 12 recipients being served, who received the meals either two, three or five days a week.

The recipients pay all or part of the cost. Meals-on-Wheels gets the rest of the money from donations and reimburses the hospital for the cost of preparing the meals.

A NEW NUTRITION program at the hospital is for the benefit of employees seeking to shed weight.

The Weight Off Wisely Club was organized by Judy Esckelsen, RN, who teaches the Wednesday afternoon class. Mrs. Johnson helps her prepare materials for the class.

Along with the teaching is the weigh-in. Members had to set their own goal, but needed to lose at least 10 pounds to join.

As an incentive to lose, members contribute a minimum of \$1 each per week. If they make their goal, they get their money back. If they don't, the money is used for purchase of educational materials for the class.

The WOW Club was started in mid-February and has about 30 members.

Even registered dieticians are not exempt from being overweight. When the club was organized, Mrs. Johnson was the first to join.

HIGH COST

The world will allow a man to have his own way if he is willing to pay the price.



FRIENDLY ADVICE -- Bonnie Johnson (left), registered dietician at Hills and Dales General Hospital, reviews a meal planning guide with Mary Hoff of Van Dyke Road, Cass City.

Obesity leads to serious ailments

From a nutrition standpoint, obesity is probably the No. 1 health problem, according to Bonnie Johnson, registered dietician at Hills and Dales General Hospital.

Being overweight can lead to a variety of problems, including diabetes, high cholesterol, stroke, hardening of the arteries and back and leg problems.

Eating the proper foods in the proper amounts, according to a pamphlet she has, means proper growth and repair of body tissues, energy, prevention of "deficiency diseases," such as anemia, rickets, scurvy and goiter and resistance to disease and infections.

In addition to too many Americans eating too much, another problem in this age of junk food is that they don't eat the proper foods for a well-balanced diet.

"We find people consuming too many fats, salt and sugar," Mrs. Johnson said. She attributes part of the blame on the pace of modern living, with persons eating out more and cooking more instant foods.

It is possible, she pointed out, to eat at a fast food restaurant and get a balanced meal, but not by eating just a hamburger, French fries and a soft drink.

For starters, don't order the hamburger that comes with three slices of bun.

That's too much starch for adults.

Red meat is not bad for adults, the dietician pointed out, as long as it isn't eaten in excess. A good substitute for the hamburger, however, would be the filet of fish.

Milk is a nutritious substitute for a soft drink. Adults should drink skim milk or low fat.

Most fast food restaurants don't serve fresh vegetable salads or fresh fruit, however, substitutes for those respectively are tomato juice and fruit juice, available at some places throughout the day.

Somewhat surprisingly, Mrs. Johnson said, a lot of misconceptions among those who believe in eating health foods.

It isn't necessarily that health foods are bad, but that they are unnecessary and thus is money spent unwisely as items purchased in health food stores cost more than in regular groceries.

"I am finding young couples, maybe those who

were on college campuses or moved from cities, have picked up those ideas (that health foods are better)," she said.

She cited an article from Michigan Health Educator magazine, in which was stated, "Foods grown with chemical fertilizers are as healthy as foods grown with natural fertilizers."

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CHECKING TRAYS for the noontime meals at Hills and Dales is Isabelle Seeley, the dietary supervisor. In the background is Marion Turner. Cards on tray in foreground will be used to designate the type of diet on each meal tray.

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