NEW STANDARDS TO IMPROVE NUTRITION FOR HOSPITAL PATIENTS

Health Minister Edwina Hart will today [Thursday, 13 August] visit Nevill Hall Hospital in Abergavenny to see how new standards on nutrition are being implemented to improve patient care.

The standards have been developed by the Welsh Assembly Government following an expert report on enhancing the role of hospital ward sisters and improving the patient’s experience in hospitals. The group said nutrition should be elevated to the same importance as medication due to its role in patient recovery.

New resources – the All Wales Food Record chart and a revised Intake and Output fluid balance chart – are being introduced to provide clear standards and guidance on nutrition in hospitals. This supports the work of nutritional risk screening, which involves monitoring food and fluid intake and output, protecting mealtimes to maximise the opportunity for nutritional intake and addressing the risk of malnutrition in vulnerable patients.

The new tools for staff have been trialed in five NHS Trusts and will now be rolled out across Wales.

An ‘e-Learning’ package is being developed and will be available by the end of the year to complement the new resources for healthcare staff which will be integrated into the NHS core training for nurses.

During the visit, the Minister will see the new electronic audit tool for recording and monitoring standards of care on wards. The tool provides ward sisters and charge nurses with information to enable them to manage their wards.

Mrs Hart said: “This is a key development in the on-going programme to improve the experience of patients in hospitals, meeting a One Wales commitment to improve hospital food and patient nutrition.

“It is important that patients have time and support to ensure that are able to eat their food.

“Staff have welcomed the development of these tools which, I believe, will help them improve care for their patients.”

The Chief Nursing Officer for Wales, Rosemary Kennedy, added: “Good quality, nutritious food is important and helps to aid a patient’s recovery. It is important especially for cardiac patients, as we can see here at Nevill Hall, as
these patients have often got to get used to changing their lifestyle and diet to improve their long-term health and well-being.

“This is therefore part of their rehabilitation process. It is good for patients to get into the habit of eating nutritious food while in hospitals.

“It is important that hospital catering, as the expert report recommends, is recognised for the contribution it has to support clinical care for patients.

“As we have already seen, NHS Trusts have taken steps to improve hospital food and to reduce opportunities to buy unhealthy food in hospitals through the banning of unhealthy vending machines.”

For more information contact Doug Nicholls on 029 2082 1823.

NOTES:

You are invited to send a reporter/photographer to Nevill Hall Hospital, Abergavenny, on Thursday 13 August at 3.30pm.

In June 2008, the Minister for Health and Social Services formally launched the Free to Lead, Free to Care: Empowering Ward Sisters/Charge Nurses Task and Finish Group report, containing the recommendations on developing a nutritional care pathway. The recommendations were proposed by a group established by the Assembly Government and included representatives from the Royal College of Nursing, UNISON and the Royal College of Midwives.

Other recommendations included uniforms for Healthcare Support Workers to hospital wards sisters/charge nurses. This was announced in May 2009 and will be phased in across Wales from October 2009. Wales is the first UK country to suggest introducing a national uniform for nurses.

Pilot tests for the new nutritional care pathway resources were done at Cardiff and Vale, Cwm Taf, Hywel Dda, North Wales NHS Trust and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University NHS Trust.

The e-learning package is in development and will be in service by the end of 2009.

CMO letter on all-Wales food Record Chart & Nutritional Care Pathway: http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/ocmo/publications/cmo/cmo09/food/?lang=en