

# Mercy Dietitians Internship

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CPH:4850 Undergraduate Internship in Public Health

## Overview

Throughout the ten weeks I spent interning for the Mercy dietitians at the hospital, I was given the opportunity to work on a variety of projects. The main project I focused on was improving the communication the dietitians have with the kitchen and helping to gather resources to provide the patients.

## Introduction

- Mercy mission statement: MercyOne serves with fidelity to the Gospel as a compassionate, healing ministry of Jesus Christ to transform the health of our communities.
- Unhealthy eating in America has been shown to cost \$50 billion in healthcare spending annually through the development of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and stroke.<sup>1</sup>
- The average cost of consuming the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables is approximately \$2.00 per day according to a USDA study<sup>2</sup>
- Proper nutrition is essential to recovering while in the hospital
- Dietitians screen patients and determine who needs to be consulted based on their health status
- Mercy has a diabetes education program where recently diagnosed patients are referred to help plan for this new lifestyle change



## Project Description

- My role in this internship was being a link between the kitchen staff (which I have been apart of for 2 years) and the dietitians.
- I helped the dietitians build a better understanding of how their interactions with the patients translate to the food they are given from the kitchen.
- Compiled resources for the dietitians to give to people who come in for consultations about their nutrition.
- Helped come up with solutions for common problems they had been having in reference to the meals that patients have been receiving.

## Other Projects

- Helping to complete health assessments offered by Mercy at Iowa City public schools
- Providing recipes for a monthly cooking blog uploaded by the dietitians
- Providing a list of foods offered at each meal
- Compiling a list of common issues with a variety of diets in our system
- Put together a list of fixable issues with the menu gathering system we use

## Personal Assessment

- Taking Nutrition in Public Health was very helpful in terms of giving me background information on different aspects of nutrition before starting my internship
- Having worked for 2 years in the kitchen at Mercy hospital was incredibly beneficial in that I already had an understanding of how one side of the overall process worked
- I was able to understand how a different department within the hospital operated and learned some of the challenges that they face on a regular basis
- My most significant accomplishment from this experience was helping a women that had recently been diagnosed with diabetes better understand how to integrate healthy eating into her lifestyle

## Conclusions + Future Impact

- This experience has been very helpful for my professional goals as I plan on entering the workforce through the healthcare setting
- It was also a helpful experience through showing me different ways that public health can be applied within a job that I already have
- I was given a better understanding of what a more professional work environment looks like

## References

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2019, December 17). Americans poor diet drives \$50 billion a year in health care costs. National Heart Lung and Blood Institute. <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/news/2019/americans-poor-diet-drives-50-billion-year-health-care-costs#:~:text=Americans%20poor%20diet%20drives%20%2450%20billion%20a%20year%20in%20health%20care%20costs,-December%2017%2C%202019&text=An%20%23NHLBI%2Dfunded%20study%20put,stroke%20and%20type%202%20diabetes.>
2. Lino, P. by D. M., Katherine, Liz, & Dooley, L. (2017, February 21). Nutrition Doesn't Have to be Expensive. USDA. <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2011/08/25/nutrition-doesnt-have-be-expensive#:~:text=According%20to%20a%20USDA%20study,using%202008%20prices%20for%20commonly.>

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