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Description of the initiative

Background / context: While nutrition care standards have been developed by many Czech hospitals, a nutrition care standard on a national level does not exist. The National standard for hospital food service was last revised in 1991. Therefore at the beginning of 2019, the Czech Republic Minister of Health initiated work on a new national standard of hospital food and nutrition care under the professional supervision of SKVIMP (CzechSPEN) and the Czech Association of Dietitians (CAD). A survey among the hospitals directly managed by the Ministry of Health (MoH) found that 68 % of the respondents manage food service based on the publication “New System of Diets for Hospitals” written by Dr. Doberský. This publication was issued as a Mandatory National Standard in 1955 and last revised in 1983. Given the historical context, the Doberský publication followed a Soviet system of numbered diets for groups of patients. It is a very detailed manual that includes diet principles, energy and nutrient intake recommendations along with hundreds of recipes. Since there is no other comparable source of information, the Czech hospital food service is still based on the Doberský publication. This is problematic because this publication is not based on current scientific evidence and promotes limiting nutrients for certain groups of patients, possibly resulting in malnutrition. In February 2020, a proposal for the new Czech Standard on Food Service & Nutrition Care in Hospitals was submitted to the MoH.

Rationale for the initiative: This proposal describes new principles that hospitals should follow in order to significantly improve the food quality and nutrition care they provide. Based on the initial comments from hospitals directly managed by the MoH, there is a need to continue developing the document and focus more on food service. Since the hospital food service staff are used to working with a very detailed manual, it is likely that there will be resistance to a new principle-based document. In order to promote acceptance of the new document and enable its successful implementation, the Czech hospital food service needs a new vision and a plan for becoming an integral and valued provider of patient-centered nutrition care.

Objectives and scope:

- 1) to facilitate the implementation of the new Czech Standard on Food Service and Nutrition Care in hospitals managed by the MoH
- 2) to create a new vision for the Czech hospital food service which produces safe, healthy and tasty meals to promote optimal nutrition care for patients
- 3) to develop a long-term action plan to achieve this vision.

Planned activities & deliverables

Outline the steps to be taken: Involve groups of experts into developing the implementation plan based on a thorough analysis of the current status in a representative sample of hospitals and a comparison with selected hospital food facility abroad, ideally in Austria and/or Germany since the cuisines are similar. The hospitals significantly differ in a size, location, clinics specialization, etc. Three main groups were identified: university hospitals, specialized hospitals and rehabilitation and spa facilities. The expert groups will include:

- Physicians in cooperation with dietitians to propose changes to the current nutrition care process which would lead to individualized diets that are based on medical (and nutritional) diagnosis.
- Nutrition scientists/dietitians will formulate a healthy diet based on current dietary guidelines and recommended levels of free sugars, SAFA, MUFA, PUFA, fibre etc.
- Respected chefs to analyse current hospital food production process and propose changes to improve its effectivity and to analyse current recipes, upgrade the traditional Czech cuisine dishes to healthier level and propose new modern, international recipes to increase variability of the offered meals
- Food technology experts to analyse the current meals preparation methods and their impact on food safety and health
- Engineers/ hygienists to analyse the hospital food distribution process and propose changes to improve the hospital food quality
- Food service staff will offer practical advice and suggestions for promoting adoption throughout local hospitals.
- Patients and caregivers will communicate preferences and priorities for food service and nutrition support in the hospital setting.

What are the concrete deliverables of the project?

- An improved patient-centered nutrition care process leading to individualized diets based on the medical diagnosis.
- Design a process to provide a healthy meals based on current dietary guidelines.
- A vision of the ideal Czech hospital food service in terms of efficient and safe production of nutritionally adequate meals that support individualized diets based on medical diagnoses.
- A long-term plan on how to fulfil that vision.

What achievements are possible in the next 12 and 24 months?

- **2020:** Experts identified and recruited; representative sample of hospitals selected; foreign partners identified; analysis of current status of the hospital food service initiated
- **2021:** A new basic healthy diet developed to the level of individual recipes and tested in the participating organizations, an upgraded nutrition care process proposed and tested, the vision of future Czech hospital food service created and feedback from participating organizations collected
- **2022:** First steps of the implementation plan to improve the hospital food service executed

Resources & enablers

- **Describe personnel, financial needs:** SKVIMP (CzechSPEN), CAD and external experts 45K€.
- **Specify how the grant will be spent:** Analysis and development work, travel costs to the participating organizations
- **What factors will make it successful?** The success will be measured by comparing the results of patients satisfaction surveys before and after implementing the changes in participating organizations, and developing an evaluation plan to assess the implementation.

Results/outcomes & expected impact

How will the findings be implemented?

In cooperation with the MoH the initiative will lead to the new Czech Standard on Food Service & Nutrition Care implementation in the hospitals directly managed by MoH

How will this project advance patient care / contribute to optimal nutritional care?

This initiative will integrate the hospital food service into the patient centred nutrition care process. The diets will be evidence based. The nutritional quality of the hospital food will be significantly improved.

What makes the project innovative?

The new Czech Standard on Food Service & Nutrition Care in Hospitals implementation will help to improve the single biggest weakness of the nutrition care process, the hospital food service.

Will the project be likely to influence national nutrition policy?

This initiative is in fact a development of the new national standard implementation plan.

Is the project transferable to other settings / countries?

Yes. The hospital food service integration into the nutrition care process will be transferable widely. The work on upgrading the hospital food service will be specifically beneficial for Eastern European countries that follow the Soviet system.