

Session I Lecture 2

Hospital Meal in Japan

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Summary

Eating healthy helps prevent and even cure disease. For inpatients, hospital meals are not only a source of enjoyment but also an important part of treatment. They do more than satisfy appetite—patients who require dietary therapy receive meals that function as medicine.

Hospitals provide many types of diets to match each patient's medical condition and swallowing ability. Options are also available for food allergies, allowing individualized nutrition to the greatest extent possible, even within institutional food service.

“One soup and three dishes” is a hallmark of washoku. UNESCO recognized washoku as an intangible cultural heritage in 2013. Because washoku is nutritionally balanced, hospital meals are often structured around it. These meals serve as a model for healthy eating after patients return home.

In terminal care, hospital meals become “food for the soul,” helping maintain quality of life. Special event meals are offered to create memorable moments at the end of life.

Hospital meals serve multiple functions; however, their primary role is in disease treatment. In Japan, where population aging and rising healthcare costs pose major challenges, disease prevention has become increasingly important. There is a growing need to apply insights from clinical nutrition to dietary practices and to extend our efforts toward prevention.