

CASE STUDY

May 2017

Hospitals across the country are taking steps to reduce sugary drink consumption and improve the food environments within their facilities as a way to support healthy diets for staff, patients, and visitors and to model health-promoting behaviors for their communities. Hospitals are improving access to physical activity through stairs, walking trails, classes, and fitness centers, as well as being smoke-free. Healthy Active Arkansas¹ has identified hospitals as lead corporations to adopt policies that address these food, beverage, and physical activity areas. National leadership has been provided by organizations such as the Children’s Hospital Association with its Advancing a Healthy Hospital Initiative,² the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Toolkit for Creating Healthy Hospital Environments,³ and, regionally, by organizations such as the Institute for a Sustainable Future and their Commons Health Hospital Challenge.⁴ This study is part of a series of case studies spotlighting hospitals’ efforts to provide healthy choices and their paths to change.

GET HEALTHY UAMS

For over a decade, the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) has implemented many policies and actions through “Get Healthy UAMS” to improve air quality, food/beverage options, and physical activity opportunities. The medical center campus became smoke-free in 2003. The food and beverage offerings on campus were initially addressed through a 2005 vending policy and subsequently by the 2012 beverage vending contract requirements. Requirements included a product ratio of at least 50 percent reduced calorie drinks (e.g., water, no/low calorie drinks, or 100 percent juice) to 50 percent full calorie drinks. Physical activity engagement efforts included opening a fitness center for employees and students, developing walking paths within and around the hospital campus, and encouraging participation in the annual Blue & You Fitness Challenge.

BEVERAGE SELECTION INNOVATIONS

UAMS Nutrition Services has instituted several practices in its campaign to promote water and no/low calorie beverages. Now, all 20 oz. bottled drinks are sold at the same price; clear front display vending machines in the cafeteria have replaced those with red plastic facades; marketing on the machines is for water and no/low calorie drinks; and these drinks are placed at eye level and the upper areas of the machines. Recent sales data has validated these efforts. Since 2013, the proportion of sales of sugar-sweetened beverages to zero/low calorie beverages has flipped from 63 percent and 37 percent, respectively, to the current 48 percent and 52 percent. This exceeds the initial goal of the campaign, which was a 50/50 split.

“We partnered with our beverage vendor to help fight obesity through marketing and more drink options: smaller sizes, additional flavored water selections, and low or no calorie options. It paid off—we’ve seen a significant decline in the sales of sugar-sweetened beverages.”

Tonya Johnson, MS RD LD CNSC, Director of Nutrition Services
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS)

UAMS Cafeteria Profile



8,300+
MEALS SERVED DAILY



\$8,000,000
ANNUAL SALES

**PERCENT SPENT ON LOCALLY
SOURCED ITEMS IN FY 2016**



16.5%



**HEART HEALTHY &
LOW CALORIE DISHES**

**PERCENT LOCALLY SOURCED/
PRODUCED ITEMS IN FY 2016**



BREADS
100%



DAIRY
96%

**RECYCLES ALL COOKING OILS &
CLEANS WITH ECOFRIENDLY PRODUCTS**



FOOD SELECTION INNOVATIONS

Food marketing at UAMS has been evolving. One example is an initiative to increase salad bar sales with daily promotions to eat the colors of the rainbow highlighting green, yellow, or purple produce. Efforts to decrease unhealthy options are also being made, such as the elimination in 2016 of unhealthy food promotions like the focus during fall on state fair foods. Simultaneously, UAMS has hired a certified master chef, Alexander Erdmann. With the dietary management team and Chef Alex, UAMS has transitioned to incorporating locally



Fresh “grab & go” salads are available each day

sourced products, buying lean meats, creating fresh salads and fresh-rolled sushi daily, focusing on “from scratch” cooking, decreasing the purchase of processed foods, decreasing the amount of sodium in foods, incorporating whole wheat products, offering daily vegetarian options, and practicing a 3-day rotation for all fresh items. Chef Alex’s concept of cooking for UAMS has a simple but meaningful focus, which he says is to “serve restaurant-quality foods to our patients, students, staff, and guests. Proper nutrition is vital to healing and preventing illness!”

The cafeteria gives back to the community through two programs. Unused, cooked food donated to Potluck, a local organization that distributes it to nonprofit community food programs. Food waste generated during food preparation is given to a food recycling organization that produces animal feed, which keeps it out of the waste stream and diverts over 100,000 tons from landfills.

ADDRESSING THE UAMS TRIPLE AIM

Improvement plans reflect UAMS’s triple aim mission of education, high quality care, and the translation of knowledge into health improvement. Calorie information will be provided at point of purchase. Monthly tent cards with health tips and recipes will be displayed. Promotions will focus on the “locally-grown, scratch-cooking” initiative, healthy monthly specials at lunch and dinner, and enhanced marketing of sushi made on-site and newly implemented 500 calorie-or-less menu items. More whole grain options, vegetable side selections, and the option of “light portions” (i.e. offering a 4 oz. portion instead of an 8 oz. portion) will be introduced. Salad bar offerings will be expanded, and “grab & go” super-food salads and a healthy breakfast plate will be created. A heightened promotion and sales of refillable water bottles will improve hydration while decreasing environmental impact.



Executive Chef
Alexander Erdmann

REFERENCES

1. Learn more about Healthy Active Arkansas at: <https://healthyactive.adh.arkansas.gov/WebsiteContent/ThePlan.aspx>
2. Learn more about the Advancing a Healthy Hospital Initiative at: <https://www.childrenshospitals.org/quality-and-performance/operations-and-performance-improvement/healthy-hospitals/advancing-a-healthy-hospital-initiative>
3. View the CDC Toolkit for Creating Healthy Hospital Environments at <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/strategies/healthy-hospital-environment-toolkit/index.html>
4. Learn more about the Commons Health Hospital Challenge at <http://www.commonshospitalchallenge.org/>

Disclaimer

This case study uses information obtained during an in-person interview and tour of the UAMS cafeteria facilities with Tonya Johnson, MS RD LD CNSC, UAMS Director of Nutrition Services; UAMS Executive Chef Alexander Erdmann; and Jennifer Paul, UAMS Assistant Director of Retail Operations. The Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI) received written permission to use this information. Additional information included was gathered from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Children’s Hospital Association, and the Institute for a Sustainable Future.