

March 2, 2009

Dear Hospital CEO:

As places of healing, hospitals have a visible incentive to provide food that's *healthy* for people and for the environment in which we live. Food can be supplied in a variety of ways, which have consequences in terms of nutrition, disease risk, public health, environmental health, and social and economic well-being. With attention to the way food is grown, to the ways it is packaged, shipped, prepared, and discarded, hospitals' food purchasing decisions and food service practices can play important roles in promoting healthy lifestyles and choices, preventing chronic disease, and contributing to ecological health.

Through the Healthy Food in Healthcare movement, **a number of hospitals across the state and nation have transformed their food purchasing and food serving practices, in recognition of their power to promote health.** As such, they have sought to write food service policies and adopt practices which:

- Emphasize nutritional value, and promote heart-healthy, calorie-conscious, and other disease-preventing food choices
- Support local businesses and producers
- Reward sustainable food production practices, such as organic growing, which minimize public health risks such as antibiotic resistance

**Your help is needed. Please facilitate the completion and return of the enclosed survey.**

The survey is designed to stimulate thought, and to help you inform us of your modern work toward healthy food service practices. The Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians has resolved to *publicly champion* those Minnesota hospitals which are helping to create food systems that promote the well being of our whole community. As signatories of the Healthy Food in Healthcare pledge ([www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org](http://www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org)), Minneapolis Children's Hospital and St. Luke's Hospital in Duluth are two local examples of health institutions which have translated new food purchasing and food service policies into community wellness promotion, cost savings, good will, and favorable publicity. Through news releases, *we would like to highlight your own efforts.*

**The MAFP feels this is important, and hopes you do, too.** Industrial food production, delivery, and service practices have led to institutional diets characterized by pre-processed, non-nutritious, fatty and carbohydrate-laden food items, contributing to our nation's epidemics of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

Fresh foods conversely are nutritious, low in calories and salt, and help to prevent these conditions as well as cancer and other chronic health conditions. Food purchased locally has maximum potential for freshness and nutritional content, and reduced potential for contamination. Local buying also supports local economies, while reducing fossil fuel consumption via shorter transport distances. Organic food producers avoid using antibiotics and pesticides, each of which has well-documented effects on human health. Recent evidence has substantiated the real health risks of trans-fats and saturated fats. Waste reduction measures such as employment of multi-use glasses, silverware, plates and bowls, minimization of reliance on prepackaged items and beverages, and donation or composting of unconsumed foods save costs, energy, and promote environmental health. These awarenesses, as highlighted by the attached survey, can drive healthy evolution in food service departmental policy.

Sincerely,

David Hutchinson, M.D., MAFP President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Hutchinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Glenn Nemec, M.D., Public Relations and Marketing Committee chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glenn Nemec M.D.". The signature is cursive and includes the initials "M.D." at the end.