



**SCIL**  
Social Compassion  
in Legislation

**Physicians  
Committee**  
for Responsible Medicine

## **MANDATORY PLANT-BASED OPTIONS IN HOSPITALS AND PRISONS BACKGROUND SHEET**

### Background:

- As the American Institute for Cancer Research stated in their 2010 report “Policy and Action for Cancer Prevention”:

“Workplaces and institutions are settings in which behavior is—at least to some extent—constrained, and in which healthy choices can be encouraged by improving access, availability, and affordability. Most people in these settings are adults. Nonetheless, employers have a duty of care, which is most obvious in institutional settings. This duty is as clearcut in hospitals, retirement homes, and prisons as it is in schools. People who are ill, injured, infirm, or imprisoned are largely or completely dependent on such institutions for food service and for physical activity facilities.”
- Cal Pen Code § 2084 states that “The department shall provide each prisoner ... with sufficient plain and wholesome food of such variety as may be most conducive to good health.” But plant-based options, the healthiest possible foods, are not available. While “[v]egetarian meals shall be available at all institutions upon request for inmates with any religious, personal, or ethical dietary need.” (15 CCR § 3054.1.) these meals are not strictly plant-based, often containing milk or egg-products.
- The American Medical Association in June 2017 promulgated a policy on Healthy Food Options in Hospitals (H-150.949) which “calls on US hospitals to improve the health of patients, staff, and visitors by: (a) providing a variety of healthful food, including plant-based meals, and meals that are low in fat, sodium, and added sugars; (b) eliminating processed meats from menus; and (c) providing and promoting healthful beverages.”
- In 2015, the IARC Working Group classified consumption of processed meat as “carcinogenic to humans” (Group 1) on the basis of sufficient evidence for colorectal cancer after assessing more than 800 epidemiological studies that investigated the association of cancer with consumption of red meat or processed meat in many countries, from several continents, with diverse ethnicities and diets. Processed meat refers to meat that has been transformed through salting, curing, fermentation, smoking, or other processes to enhance

flavor or improve preservation. IARC formally listed “Processed meat (consumption of)” on its list of “Agents Classified by the IARC Monographs” as carcinogenic to humans (Group 1).

### Discussion:

- Institutions which provide food to “captive audiences” have a particular responsibility to provide the healthiest possible options. Plant-based foods have no cholesterol, provide much-needed fiber and other nutrients, and are acceptable to most world religions and ethical schools, as well posing fewer problems for people with common food sensitivities like egg and dairy. For these reasons, plant-based options should be provided and promoted in all public institutions, including but not limited to prisons and hospitals.
- An estimated 1.3 million Americans have colorectal cancer, which is caused by factors including carcinogenic processed meats and low-fiber diets, and 50,000 Americans die of complications of colorectal cancer annually. Rates of colorectal cancer are increasing among the young. Requiring the availability of plant-based meals in California institutions will help address the second-leading cause of cancer deaths (<https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/annual-cancer-facts-and-figures/2017/estimated-deaths-for-the-four-major-cancers-by-sex-and-age-group-2017.pdf>) and provide an example of healthful eating to the general public.
- Plant-based options can be provided as cheaply or more cheaply as meals with animal-products, suggesting possible cost savings for institutions. Improvements in health of prisoners, hospital patients, and school children could lead to significant public health cost savings in California.

### Resources:

**The AMA and American College of Cardiology calls for healthier food in hospitals:**

- **California penal codes attached.**
- **American Medical Association:** <https://policysearch.ama-assn.org/policyfinder/detail/food?uri=%2FAMADoc%2FHOD.xml-0-627.xml>
- **American College of Cardiology:** <http://www.acc.org/membership/sections-and-councils/prevention-of-cardiovascular-disease-section/about-us/section-sub-groups/features/hospital-food-program>

**Respected experts are focused on the link between nutrition, hospitals, and patient health:**

- **Ethics of Hospital Cafeteria Food:** <http://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/2013/04/ecas3-1304.html>
- **Permanente Journal, Plant-Based Diets:** [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3662288/pdf/permj17\\_2p0061.pdf](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3662288/pdf/permj17_2p0061.pdf)

### **Healthfulness of plant-based diets:**

- **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics:**

<http://www.eatrightpro.org/~media/eatrightpro%20files/practice/position%20and%20practice%20papers/position%20papers/vegetarian-diet.ashx>

### **Plant-based meals are cost-effective and popular:**

- **Examples of cost savings in a medical environment:**

<http://www.bringfoodforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Hospital-MM-Toolkit-111215.pdf> (page 3)

- **Examples of inexpensive plant-based options:**

<http://ucdintegrativemedicine.com/2015/03/cheap-or-expensive-the-real-truth-about-plant-based-diets/#gs.62NXkhU>

- **Meatless Mondays maintain sales:** <http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-a-livable-future/pdf/research/Sodexo.pdf>

**Cancer statistics:** <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/annual-cancer-facts-and-figures/2017/estimated-deaths-for-the-four-major-cancers-by-sex-and-age-group-2017.pdf>