Caroline Lamb
Chief Executive
NHS Scotland

12 April 2022

Via e-mail: DGHSC@gov.scot

Dear Ms Lamb:

At this time of health and climate crises, we, the undersigned, urge NHS Scotland to switch to vegan menus for patients in hospitals. Replacing meat, eggs, and dairy with vibrant vegan foods is vital if we are to protect the health of Scottish people *and* the planet.

The "Independent Review of NHS Hospital Food" report stated what most health professionals already know: "Food is a form of medicine." It is a dereliction of duty that meals offered in hospitals are often far from healthy and can even include red and processed meats, which are known to be carcinogenic – it's equivalent to distributing cigarettes in the pulmonary-care unit. There's a higher incidence of early death and obesity as well as "lifestyle diseases" like diabetes, heart disease, and strokes in groups that consume meat, eggs, and dairy, which are laden with saturated fat. Obesity rates in Scotland are among the highest in the world, putting people at particular risk of developing severe illness or dying as a result of COVID-19.

Serving meals rich in fruits, vegetables, and plant-based protein would benefit patients' recovery and help keep them from becoming returning customers. It's been estimated that the NHS could save more than £30 billion per year if all meals served in the UK were vegan. The inclusive nature of vegan dishes would also offer hospitals an opportunity to streamline their catering operations.

The EAT-Lancet Commission reports that whole grains, fruits, vegetables, pulses, and nuts not only are great for our health but also have the lowest environmental impact. Eating a plant-based diet can lower your carbon footprint from food by up to 73%. Animal agriculture is driving the climate and ecological crises, deforestation, ocean acidification, water pollution, biodiversity loss, and pandemics. The National Food Strategy and Climate Change Committee call for a significant reduction in the amount of meat served in the public sector.

Switching to 100% vegan menus for patients in hospitals would help NHS Scotland improve patient recovery, reduce costs, prevent animal suffering, and meet its commitment to reaching net-zero carbon emissions – it's a win-win-win-win.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Ailis Brosnan, plant-based wellness expert

Dr Alan Desmond, NHS Consultant Gastroenterologist
Dr Carys Bennett, Corporate Projects Manager, PETA
Dr Fiona Bullions, GP Principal
Dr Laura Freeman, Medical Director, Plant Based Health Online
Dr Mahesh Shah, The Green Doctor Ltd
Dr Miriam Maisel, GP
Dr Nick Browne, GP Principal
Dr Nitu Bajekal, senior consultant gynaecologist and boards-certified lifestyle medicine physician
Dr Olga Morton, GP and Lifestyle Medicine Physician
Dr Shireen Kassam, Founder and Director, Plant-Based Health Professionals UK
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Rita Castanhito, plant-based nutritionist
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