

Addressing Food Insecurity in Medically Complex & Socially At-Risk Patients

•Zeeshan Yacoob, MD, MPH¹; Stephenie Quirke, DO¹; Do Duy Dang, BS²; Cathryn Phouybanhdyt, BA²; Jessica J.F. Kram, MPH³; George Neureuther⁴; Glenda Sundberg, NP¹

¹Aurora Family Medicine Residency Program, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; ²University of Wisconsin-School of Medicine & Public Health; ³Aurora University of Wisconsin Medical Group, Center for Urban Population Health, Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; ⁴Interchange Food Pantry, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

INTRODUCTION

The Issue: Food Insecurity in Milwaukee

- Milwaukee ranks 71 out of 72 counties in terms of health.¹
- Milwaukee's projected food insecurity rate is 13.1%.²
- Food deserts limit access to food especially in low-income neighborhoods.³

The Initiative: Bridging the Gap Between Clinics and Food Insecurity

- Many of our residency clinic patients are medically complex, socially at-risk for increased hospital admissions (hotspots), and are on fixed budgets.
- Currently our clinics do not routinely screen patients for food insecurity.
- The purpose of our study is to highlight the importance of screening for food insecurity and to pilot a creative solution to assist our patients.

METHODS

- This project focused on 62 hotspot patients currently enrolled at two of our family medicine residency clinics.
- A total of 45 ultimately underwent food insecurity screening. Those with food insecurity were administered a quality-of-life survey (QOL).
- 15 were noted to have "very low food security". Of these 8 were randomly selected for the intervention group and received monthly food deliveries from a local food pantry, which were delivered by the medical team.
- During these deliveries, qualitative data was collected. At end of the study, a repeat QOL survey was administered to all participants.

"I don't have to go out and I don't have to worry about the next meal. The vegetables are good. I'm thankful."



"I liked it a lot. It helped with staying up with the food so that I [...] have food in my refrigerator and in my freezer so I'm thankful for that."

The Food Recipients:



"It's been a big help. I haven't been able to get to the store since I've been in and out of the hospital."

The Food Delivery Team:



"Since they removed my teeth I lost 30 lbs. You guys brought me things that I can actually eat."

RESULTS

Quantitative Results

- **49%** screened positive for some level of food insecurity.
- **68%** of the food insecure had very low food security.
- While the overall QOL remained unchanged, improvement was noted in the social relationships' domain (p=0.01).

4 qualitative themes emerged:

1. Appreciated Food Visits
2. Enjoyed Food Quality and Quantity
3. Improved Food Insecurity
4. Bridged Transportation Access

DISCUSSION

- Our main limitation was our small sample size, which made it difficult to achieve any statistically significant changes in quality-of-life scores.
- Innovative, novel approaches are essential to bridge system gaps, achieve better health outcomes and improve the overall wellbeing of patients and providers.
- Our project reflects compassionate humanity which is the core of what we do and it matters.

FUTURE PLANS

- Increased food insecurity screening among our general patient population.
- Continued partnership with the Interchange Food Pantry
- Expanded food deliveries (Goal 50-100 households)



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