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# Addressing Food Insecurity in the Clinical Setting

Annabelle Davey

*University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine*

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# Addressing Food Insecurity in the Clinical Setting

CVPH Family Medicine, Plattsburgh, NY

Annabelle Davey, MS3

Family Medicine, July-August 2019

Project Mentor: Steven Heintz, MD

## 2: Food insecurity

- **Food security:** all household members have access to enough food for an active, healthy life, without any reduction or disruption in meal frequency (Coleman-Jensen *et al.*)
  - **Food insecurity is defined as reduction and disruption in meal frequency**
- 12-14% of Americans are food insecure (Coleman-Jensen *et al.*, Berkowitz *et al.*)
- 12% of residents of Clinton County are food insecure (“Data by County”, Feeding America)

# 3: Public Health Cost of Food Insecurity

- Worse health outcomes associated with food-insecurity
  - Children: birth defects, anemia, nutrient deficiencies, cognitive problems, aggression, anxiety, asthma, depression, higher risk of hospitalization (Gunderson *et al.*)
  - Adults: diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, depression, in poor or fair health (Gunderson *et al.*)
  - Elderly: depression, limits in ADLs, in poor or fair health, higher risk of nursing home admission (Gunderson *et al.*, Szanton)
- Increased healthcare spending (Berkowitz *et al.*)
  - \$1,863 more per food-insecure individual as compared to food-secure individuals
  - Additional \$77.5 billion annually

# 4a: Community Perspective

- “The National WIC Association states children who participate in WIC are more likely to receive regular healthcare and get fewer childhood illnesses like ear infections, stomach viruses, and colds.” -Kelsey Barnes, Public Health Nutrition Educator for the Clinton County WIC program
- “For some of our more rural clients, the [food delivery] driver is the only person they see for extended periods of time. This daily contact, combined with the nutritionally balanced meals, ensures the safety of some of our isolated seniors enabling them to stay in their homes longer.” –Debbie Alexander, Congregate Meals Director for the Clinton County Office for the Aging
- “Eating a diet high in nutritious foods is one of the best things you can do for your health. Unfortunately, the healthiest foods like fruits and vegetables can also be the most expensive and our patients have a lot of trouble affording them.” -Julianne Macaulay, MD

# 4b: Community Perspective

## Conclusions

- High reports of satisfaction with food assistance programs
- Food assistance programs are available for short- or long-term help
- Food assistance programs also assist patients with other needs related to their general state of health

# 5: Intervention and Methodology

- Survey of providers to determine barriers to screening for food insecurity and to recommending resources to food-insecure patients
- Pamphlet for patients (next slide)
  - Resources in Clinton County to address food insecurity, including locations, hours, and contact information
- Presentation to CVPH Family Medicine residents
  - The public health cost of food insecurity
  - The importance of connecting food-insecure patients with resources
  - Local food resources

# 5B: Intervention and Methodology

## Patient Pamphlet

### 1 in 8 people in Clinton County have trouble affording food

Not having enough nutritious food to eat is associated with increased illness in children, adults, and the elderly. These illnesses include:

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Asthma
- Depression
- Physical disability

### Hungry?

Resources are available to help afford nutritious food for you and your family

THE  
**University of Vermont**  
HEALTH NETWORK  
Champlain Valley Physicians Hospital



### Food Pantries

JCEO Food Pantry  
59 Margaret Street  
Plattsburgh, NY  
Hours:  
Mon-Fri: 12pm – 3:30pm

Plattsburgh Interfaith Food Pantry  
127 Beekman Street  
Plattsburgh, NY  
Hours:  
Mon-Thurs: 9am – 12pm  
Fri: 9am – 12pm, 4pm – 6pm

*"Eating a diet high in nutritious foods is one of the best things you can do for your health. Unfortunately, the healthiest foods like fruits and vegetables can also be the most expensive."* –Dr. Julianne Macaulay

### WIC Program

The Women, Infants & Children (WIC) program is for pregnant women, new mothers, and children under five years old. They help families access nutritious food and build healthy habits so that kids can grow up happy and healthy.

All patients who are pregnant, postpartum, or under the age of 5 who have Medicaid, even as a backup insurance, are automatically qualified for the WIC program.

Find out if you are eligible for the WIC program:  
(518) 565-4830

**Ask your doctor for a referral to the WIC program if you think it might be right for you and your children.**

*"We provide nutrition education and nutritious foods, and a lot of families utilize WIC as a gateway when they are in need of another community resource until they are back on their feet."* — Kelsey Barnes, Public Health Nutrition Educator for the WIC Program



### Programs for Seniors

The Clinton County Office for the Aging offers programs for all citizens over 60 years old.

Phone: (518) 561-8320  
Website:  
[www.clintoncounty.gov/aging/services\\_for\\_the\\_aging/nutrition\\_services](http://www.clintoncounty.gov/aging/services_for_the_aging/nutrition_services)

**Senior Dining Centers** offer lunch and an opportunity to socialize Monday-Friday every week at multiple locations. Meals are open to all, with a suggested donation of \$3 per meal, but no one is turned away because of inability to contribute.

**Home Delivered Meals Program** provides meals for seniors who are homebound or who are unable to prepare food for themselves. Daily contact with delivery drivers can also help ensure the safety of seniors living in isolated areas.

**Ask your doctor for a referral to the Home Delivered Meals Program if you are over 60 years old and need assistance preparing meals.**

*"Our greatest strength is our home style cooked meals. They are nutritionally balanced and provide one third of the recommended daily intake for a senior."*  
–Debbie Alexander, Congregate Meals Director for the Clinton County Office for the Aging

# 6: Results/Response

- 100% of providers surveyed (n=7) identified lack of information about local food resources as a barrier to recommending resources
- Presentation to residents was well-received
  - Residents noted that they were previously unaware of local resources to recommend to patients
- Pamphlet
  - Consolidated information about resources to one place
  - Allows clinicians to provide patients with information quickly without taking time away from addressing other medical issues

# 7: Evaluation of Effectiveness and Limitations

- Evaluation of effectiveness:
  - Pamphlet and presentation effectiveness could be evaluated by repeating the initial survey to assess if the new information has changed screening/recommending behaviors and if it has changed the providers' knowledge of local food resources
- Limitations:
  - Does not provide information to patients who are illiterate or vision-impaired
  - Does not address barriers to patients accessing food resources (e.g. transportation, time)

# 8: Future Directions

- Interviews with patients to formally assess needs
  - Explore patient preferences of how screening is conducted, and food resources are recommended
  - Assess patient perception of food insecurity
- Presentation to attending physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners within the practice
- Create a dot phrase for screening purposes
  - CVPH Family Medicine will be switching to Epic as the electronic medical record in upcoming months
  - A dot phrase could be created to increase the screening rate

# 9: References

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# 10: Consents

**Consented**   x  

**Name:**   Julianne Macaulay  

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Consented**   x  

**Name:**   Kelsey Barnes  

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Consented**   x  

**Name:**   Debbie Alexander  

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_