Food Insecurity in Kalamazoo

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WMU ScholarWorks Citation
Sweda, Nicholas; Dickson, Cheryl A.; Friedman, Jeffrey; Knapp, Michelle L.; Lee, David; and Tran, Vina, "Food Insecurity in Kalamazoo" (2017). Research Day, 63.
http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/medicine_research_day/63

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Introduction

Food insecurity definition - “A household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food”

- More than 13.1 million food-insecure children in the US
- Health issues associated with food insecurity:
  - Nutritional deficits
  - Developmental difficulties
  - Behavioral problems
  - Educational, personal, and professional challenges
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) validated questions for screening food insecurity
  - Within the past 12 mo, we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more (Yes or No)
  - Within the past 12 mo, the food we bought just didn’t last and we didn’t have money to get more (Yes or No)
- Food insecurity is an under-recognized problem
- Kalamazoo Loaves and Fishes (KLF) filled over 180,000 food orders in 2016
- It is unclear what resources local physicians are aware of in helping secure access to food assistance programs

Methods

- A 20-question survey was electronically distributed to assess awareness of food insecurity among Kalamazoo pediatric and family medicine physicians
- Survey questions covered years of practice, usage of the AAP questions, level of formal training on food insecurity, mid-level and support staff, and resources recommended to patients

Results

- 25 responses were analyzed for differences between groups
  - No significant relationships found
  - 76% of respondents believed food insecurity directly related to their patients’ illness
  - Only 52% asked direct questions about food insecurity
  - 92% made WIC program referrals
  - 92% were willing to include the two AAP-validated food insecurity screening questions in their practice
  - Consensus that having a list of local resources would be helpful in addressing food insecurity

Discussion

- Kalamazoo pediatricians and family medicine physicians believe food insecurity directly relates to the problems affecting their patients
  - Only half of physicians ask patients about food insecurity
- Future work should focus on:
  - Expanding physician-patient conversations about food insecurity
  - Addition of validated food insecurity questions to patient questionnaires
  - Compiling a list of local resources for distribution to local providers

Acknowledgements

We thank Kalamazoo Loaves and Fishes for their assistance. We also thank Heather Rauch, Alyssa Woodwyk, and Duncan Vos from the WMed Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics for their data analysis and expertise

References