Building Systems to Evaluate Food Insecurity Screening and Diabetes Within an FQHC

Danielle Lazar, Director of Research, Access Community Health Network
Kathleen Gregory, Principal, Kathleen Gregory Consulting, LLC
Jonathan Blitstein, Senior Researcher, RTI

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Introduction of Speakers

- **Danielle Lazar**, AM, DrPh candidate, Director of Research and the Center for Discovery and Learning, Access Community Health Network
- **Kathleen Gregory**, MBA, Principal, Kathleen Gregory Consulting, LLC and former Vice President of Strategy and Business Development, Access Community Health Network
- **Jonathan Blitstein**, PhD, Senior Research, RTI International

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Goals of Today’s Webinar

1. Describe innovation in practice within an FQHC that addresses food insecurity
2. Describe the origin, purpose and framework of the evaluation
3. Share lessons learned through system-wide evaluation of the innovation – from initial planning to implementation
4. Understand what it takes to build a culture of research and evaluation within a community health setting
About Access Community Health Network

• ACCESS operates 36 health centers across Chicago, suburban Cook and DuPage counties

• ACCESS served more than 183,000 low-income individuals annually, including 34,655 uninsured patients in CY’17.

• ACCESS' patient demographics reflect the communities we proudly serve each day:
  • 52% are Hispanic
  • 30% are African-American
  • 84% live at or below the 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level

• Established evaluation and research department
Food Insecurity and Impact on Diabetes Care

- Diabetes care accounts for 1 in 5 health dollars in the U.S. with low-income, minority populations disproportionately affected. ¹, ²
- Adults with diabetes are 40 percent more likely to have poor glycemic control if they are food insecure due to a lack of continuous food supply and the financial need to prioritize bills over food. ³
- Diabetics who cannot afford adequate food are likely to have five times more medical encounters than those who can afford adequate food. ⁴

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Food Insecurity and Diabetes

- The rate of food insecurity in Chicago is **19.2** percent.
- More than **900,000** people in the areas served by ACCESS are living with food insecurity.
- **14** percent of ACCESS’ **105,000** adult patients have Type 2 diabetes.
- One-third of ACCESS’ patients have poorly controlled diabetes, defined by Hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) greater than nine.
Social Medical Approaches are Needed

- Institute of Medicine report advocates that interventions targeted within community-based settings are critical for implementing optimal chronic disease management.
- Standard practice continues to use a solely clinical approach to diabetes care.
Approach to Innovation

• Promotes a culture of health, providing patients the means and opportunity to make choices that lead to the healthiest lives possible
• Incorporates screening for social determinants into primary care practice
• Creates deliberate connection to community resources
• Requires providers to acknowledge that food insecure patients frequently face tough choices between affording food, medications, and household bills that negatively impact health.

*Hypothesis: Improved quality of care/knowledge of social determinants and increased access to a more stable supply of food, translates to improved patient satisfaction and health outcomes.*
Food Insecurity Intervention

• Patients are screened at every primary care visit by an ACCESS Medical Assistant using the validated USDA food insecurity two-question tool.
• If a patient screens positive, the provider gives basic nutrition education, and an onsite Benefits Specialist assists with SNAP enrollment.
• Patients are also referred to local food pantries and, if available, a mobile FRESHTruck that visits the health center.
• Screening results and referral information are documented and tracked in the patient’s care plan in the electronic health record (EHR), and the patient receives the referral via the After Visit Summary.
• “Eat Right When Money’s Tight” education collateral is shared with all patients.
Goal of the Evaluation

Our goal is to determine whether an innovation that integrates food insecurity screening into a health center setting improves diabetes control.

Primary Evaluation Question:

Do food insecure diabetic patients provided with access to food resources (e.g., SNAP benefits and food pantries) achieve improved glycemic control compared with food secure diabetic patients?
Secondary Evaluation Questions:

- Does the innovation reduce the proportion of low-income diabetic patients who experience food insecurity?
- Do patients access food resources more frequently after exposure to the innovation?
- Does the innovation improve patients’ quality of life (e.g., reduction in the number of tough choices)?
- What is the financial return on investment?
Evaluation Design

• Prospective Case-Control Study
  o Cases = Food insecure patients with diabetes
  o Controls = Food secure patients with diabetes

• Repeated measures design
  o Convenience sample of participants
  o Statistical models will assess change over time among cases relative to change over time among controls

• Sample size (anticipated)
  o 456 Food secure patients
  o 228 Food insecure patients
**Participant Selection/Inclusion Criteria**

- **Recruitment plan**
  - Posters
  - Referrals (phone referral, in-person referral)

- **Inclusion criteria**
  - Diagnosed with diabetes, 18 years of age or older
  - Completed food insecurity screening within 30 days of enrollment
  - Has HbA1c lab result at ACCESS within 30 days of enrollment or ordered at baseline visit
  - Able to complete survey in English or Spanish, able and willing to give informed consent

- **Exclusion criteria** – pregnant at time of enrollment
Baseline data collection: February 2017 – October 2017

1st reminder postcard

In-person survey data collection (baseline health center visit)

Follow-up health center visit

2nd reminder postcard

Telephone survey data collection

Follow-up data collection: August 2017 – July 2018
Data sources and measures

- **Patient Survey**
  - Community accessibility to healthy foods
  - Use of food assistance programs/resources
  - Food resource management
  - Tough choices
  - Medication adherence

- **Electronic Medical Records**
  - Demographics (age, race, ethnicity, home zip code, primary language, payor type, and poverty status of uninsured patients)
  - Food security status
  - Prescription for diabetes medications
  - Health outcomes (i.e., HbA1c, blood pressure, and microalbumin ratio)
Launching the Intervention and Evaluation

**Intervention**

- Approximately 5 months working across departments and health centers to implement and stabilize intervention
- Identified implementation challenges through training and initiation of intervention

**Evaluation**

- Created evaluation operations plan, coordinated logistics across health centers
- Hired and trained staff
- Applied for IRB Approval
- Negotiated contracts

Communication and stakeholder engagement strategy, plan and implementation
Electronic Health Record set up for intervention, recruitment, monitoring and reporting
Timeline of Implementation

- **JULY 2016 – OCT 2016**: Intervention planning and update
- **NOVEMBER 2016**: IRB approval
- **JULY – AUGUST 2017**: Inclusion criteria changed based on learnings
- **JUNE 2018**: Targeted completion date for all follow-up
- **SEPTEMBER 2016**: Intervention training
- **JANUARY 2017**: Recruitment launched
- **NOVEMBER 2017**: Recruitment ended
Recruitment Results

• Recruited 993 total patients from January 2017 to November 2017
• 840 Food secure vs. 93 food insecure patients
• Slower and fewer than originally anticipated
• Modified inclusion criteria in August to account for variability in keeping appointments and stability of a1c clinical measure
• Determined based on available resources and total study population that much could still be learned
Participant Demographics at Baseline

Similar to ACCESS patient population

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Next Steps

• Complete follow-up data collection by July 2018
  o As of 3/28/18, 323 patients eligible for follow-up

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<td>Contacted Max Number of Times</td>
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• Conduct Analyses
  o Survey analysis
  o Clinical data analysis
  o Qualitative analysis of focus groups
  o Cost analysis

• Publishing and dissemination
Lessons Learned

• Collaboration across institutions opens opportunities for evaluation design.

• Planning is critical. Getting “real” is important too.

• Communication must be intentional.

• Training is a process, not a one-time event.

• Practice-based evaluation studies can require significant adaptation of IS infrastructure.
Lessons Learned

• Recruit, adapt and re-allocate resources to respond to reality on the ground.

• Balance business needs with study aims.

• Celebrate what you have learned, and share your findings.
Questions?

Danielle Lazar, Director of Research, Access Community Health Network
danielle.lazar@achn.net

Kathleen Gregory, Principal, Kathleen Gregory Consulting, LLC
emailkathleen@yahoo.com

Jonathan Blitstein, PhD, Senior Researcher, RTI
jblitstein@rti.org

connect with us
www.achn.net