A Survey Evaluating Healthy Eating choices, Food Pantry Use and Accessibility, and Food Insecurity

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BACKGROUND

- Food pantries are essential for those who experience food insecurity and provide a vast portion of participants nutritional intake.¹,²
- Increasing the quality of foods in the food pantry helps participants meet some of the daily recommended dietary requirements for healthy living.²
- Community engagement in research is vital to ensure that change occurs. It is implemented with trust³, feedback⁴, and sharing of leadership roles in research⁵.
- Altamed launched My Community, My Health Coalition (MCMH) and the Community Organizing Institute (COI) and partnered with DESI to improve the DESI food pantry.
- The COI has a current focus on decreasing sugary foods and drinks to improve oral health.

OBJECTIVES

- Gauge participants healthy eating choices, food pantry use, accessibility to food pantry, and assessment of food insecurity.
- Use the data to create healthy food pantry policy and healthcare based solutions to address food insecurity with patients.

METHODOLOGY

- Survey created by SELA Health Allies, project leaders, PLCP and HCOP scholars.
- Survey was printed consisting of 14 questions.
- Survey was distributed at DESI food pantry on July 9th to 43 Spanish and English speaking participants.
- Those who participated received a $10 visa card.
- Data was organized into excel sheet to perform a t-test and gather the percentage of participants per response.

RESULTS

- The third highest represented zip code, 90201, representing Bell Gardens is farther than the top two zip codes, 90022 and 9063. This may be due to participants from farther cities preferring DESI food pantry over the food pantries in their area because of the access to healthier foods.
- Non-sugary drinks were consumed significantly less than sugary drinks daily. This helps in assessing the impact the sugary drinks have on oral health.
- Despite the DESI food pantry, participants still experienced food insecurity. However, for 26% of our participants it was their first time going to the food pantry.
- Improvements made on the food in DESI food pantry were confirmed when 73.2% percent of our participants claimed a strong improvement to their access to healthier and fresh foods and 90.7% of participants receiving and consuming fruits and vegetables from the food pantry.
- While some participants said the sign was visible, there needs to be improvement to the signage for the food pantry.

CONCLUSION

- Participants met some of the daily recommended dietary requirements by vitamins, micronutrients, and macronutrients.
- Partner with clinics and medical providers to collect clinical metrics such as blood pressure, A1C and cholesterol to see if the food changes in the pantry have helped reduce these numbers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve visibility of signage to improve accessibility to food pantry, and assessment of food insecurity.
- Survey participants for how the food pantry is meeting the needs of participants.
- Partner with clinics and medical providers to collect clinical metrics such as blood pressure, A1C and cholesterol to see if the food changes in the pantry have helped reduce these numbers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NMF Primary Care Leadership Program
AltaMed Commerce, CA
Dr. Gloria Montiel, Noemi Mendez, Corina Martinez and Alicia Rodarte
Erick Leyva, Dr. Angulo, and Dr. Liu
AltaMed Health Services Corporation

REFERENCES

9. PMID: 27515521; PMCID: PMC4982436.

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FOOTNOTES