Integrating Medical Food Pantry Voucher into EHR for Increased Use
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What?
ECU Health Medical Food Pantry

- More than 560,000 people are food insecure across Eastern North Carolina’s 34-county area. This is 111,000 more than the prior year. In the United States, in 2022, more than 44 million people in the United States experience food insecurity.

- Started in 2018 by Brody graduates as part of their service-learning distinction track project.

- The ECU Health Medical Food Pantry serves ECU Health’s patient population across various clinics. It works by providers filling out a voucher if food insecurity is identified and the patient coming to the pantry to collect a bag of food. Some clinics have pre-made bags delivered to the clinic so they can be provided as needed.

- Located in Doctor’s Park, building #2

So What?

- There are barriers to patients receiving their bag including transportation to the clinic for care followed by the pantry.

- Individuals with Medicaid and Medicare have access to free transportation that will take them to medical appointments, but not to a grocery store or food pantry.

- In 2023, the pantry gave away 574 bags.

- The voucher is currently not integrated into EPIC, so it can be forgotten by physicians.

Now What?

- Organize a food drive during the school year for most needed items.

- Pantry staff are working on creating a SmartPhrase for EPIC that physicians can integrate into their notes.

- Provide education to healthcare providers on how to use the SmartPhrase and information to share with patients about the pantry.

- Long-term Goal: Establish with Medicaid a transportation option to the pantry for those who experience that barrier.

Medical Food Pantry

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