



David Geffen
School of Medicine

Food for Thought: Self-Perceived Food Insecurity Amongst Harbor-UCLA Food Pharmacy Recipients

Samantha Mohammad¹, Pranav Shetty²

¹ David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, ² Harbor-UCLA Medical Center



INTRODUCTION

- Food insecurity is defined by the USDA as a “household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.”¹
- Both adults and children with food insecurity are at an increased risk for multiple health conditions including obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and mental health conditions.
- According to the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in food insecurity throughout Los Angeles County from 20% pre-pandemic, to the current rate of 25%.²
- To combat rising rates of food insecurity, Harbor-UCLA has collaborated with Food Forward and the American Heart Association to create a food pharmacy, which provides free fresh produce to the surrounding community once a week.

OBJECTIVES

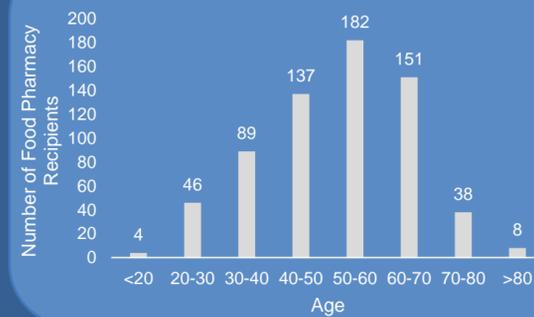
- Describe the population of the Harbor-UCLA Food Pharmacy recipients and their self-reported levels of food insecurity.

METHODS

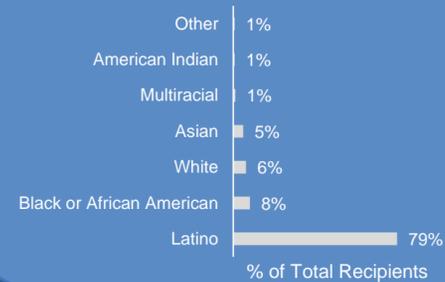
- Descriptive study of 668 food pharmacy recipients over 9 weeks.
- All food pharmacy recipients were eligible and were offered to complete the survey.
- Survey data was collected, cleaned, and analyzed using Excel.

RESULTS

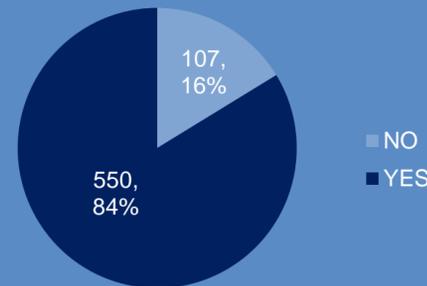
Ages of Food Pharmacy Recipients



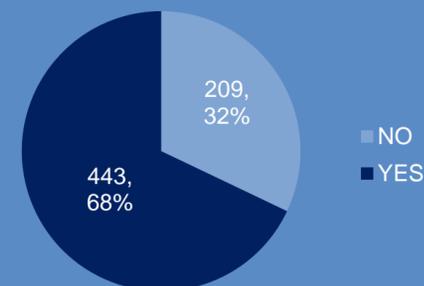
Racial and Ethnic Breakdown of Food Pharmacy Recipients



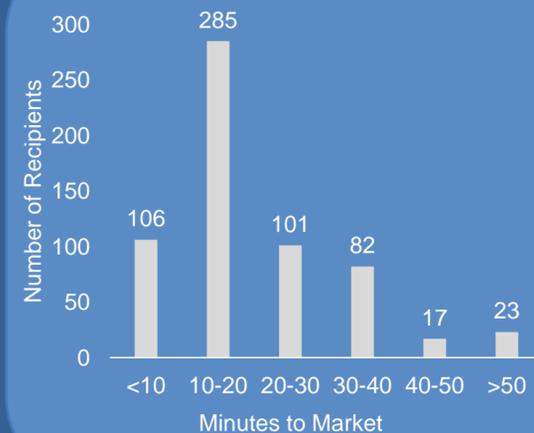
Within the past 12 months, have you worried whether your food would run out before you had enough money to buy more?



Within the past 12 months, did the food you bought not last when you did not have enough money to buy more?



Time to Market



Self-Perceived Health Status



RESULTS

- Of our sample, 72% of recipients fell between 40-70 years old with an average age of 51 years old.
- 79% of our those who responded self-identified as Latino.
- 84% of individuals reported worrying whether their food would run out before having money to purchase more over a 12-month period.
- 68% of individuals reported experiencing episodes where their food did not last, and they did not have money to buy more over a 12-month period.
- 82% of individuals reported a greater than 10-minute transit time to the nearest grocery store with an average of 17 minutes.
- 41% of food pharmacy recipients self-reported their health as fair or poor.

CONCLUSIONS

- Our findings demonstrate that compared to the average rate of food insecurity throughout Los Angeles County, our Harbor-UCLA Food Pharmacy recipients reported experiencing more significant rates.
- This shows that food pharmacies may be one possible social medicine intervention to support patients with low access to quality foods.
- More research needs to be performed to evaluate improvements in levels of food security among food pharmacy recipients.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES

1. Definitions of Food Security. USDA ERS - Definitions of Food Security. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security.aspx#:~:text=Food%20insecurity%E2%80%94the%20condition%20assessed,may%20result%20from%20food%20insecurity.> Published September 9, 2020. Accessed March 15, 2021.
2. Hunger in Los Angeles County. Los Angeles Regional Food Bank. <https://www.lafoodbank.org/about/hunger-in-la/>. Published 2021. Accessed March 15, 2021.