Home Food Delivery to Address Food Insecurity Following Hospital Discharge

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Nearly 1 in 5 families with children in the United States are food insecure. Hospitalization of a child can exacerbate food insecurity, both during the hospitalization and after discharge. Although some hospitals provide free or subsidized meals during hospitalization, few address food insecurity in the immediate posthospitalization period. To address this gap, we developed an innovative Inpatient Food Pharmacy program. This program offers families of hospitalized children experiencing food insecurity a choice of 1 week of prepared meals, 6 months of monthly produce delivery, or both, after discharge. Our goals were to assess program enrollment, understand family preferences, and evaluate the program's feasibility and acceptability. Among 120 eligible families, 71 (59%) enrolled. Fifty-five families (77%) chose both prepared meals and produce delivery, 13 (18%) chose prepared meals only, and 3 (4%) chose produce delivery only. The program successfully delivered 6972 prepared meals and 348 boxes of produce over 10 months. Follow-up calls reached 41 (58%) of enrolled families, all of whom reported that the program met their acute food needs. Feedback from families and resource navigators suggested the program was acceptable. We aim to advocate for sustainable funding for food delivery for children and families experiencing food insecurity at 3 levels (1) institutionally, through our hospital's community benefit spending, (2) statewide, through a proposed Medicaid Section 1115 waiver providing grocery delivery to Medicaid-insured pregnant and postpartum individuals and their families, and (3) federally, through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

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