

# An Innovative Approach to Food Insecurity in Medical Resident Clinics: Creation of a Food Pantry



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## Introduction

Food insecurity is a frequently encountered challenge that impacts wellness, healthcare compliance, and healthcare delivery<sup>1, 2, 5</sup>.

The city of Rochester has a food insecurity rate of 25.9%. The US food insecurity rate was 10.5% in 2019<sup>3,4</sup>.

Study aims included:

- To better understand food insecurity through our patient's experiences
- To develop a process to screen for food insecurity and provide resources to food insecure patients

## Methods

Multidisciplinary team:

- 4 internal medicine residents
- 1 nurse practitioner
- 1 dietician
- 1 internal medicine attending physician

Study participants: Patients seen in Strong Internal Medicine, an integrated faculty-resident primary care practice at the University of Rochester Medical Center. Patients were chosen by purposive sampling.

Conducted a qualitative needs-based assessment through 13 semi-structured phone interviews with patients. Interviews were reviewed by team members to identify themes.

Created a food insecurity screening process for our internal medicine practice with a goal of screening at least 10% of our patients for food insecurity by March 2022.

Created a post-food pantry screen within our electronic health record to assess the efficacy of our interventions.

## Results

Patient voices:

- "I diet if the food does not last."
- "I make sure my boys eat. Sometimes I go without food, but it doesn't bother me. I try to eat a lot of soup."
- "I always run out of food before my next grocery trip. When I say 'running out of food' – there is no food. I can't throw things together 'cause there isn't any."

Results

- 7/13 only purchase food once a month because SNAP benefits (food stamps) are distributed monthly
- 6/13 screened positive for food insecurity using standardized screening questions
- Positive views regarding creating a food pantry and providing resources within our clinic

In response, we created a food pantry and introduced a process for screening and distributing food to patients in need

Over the course of 3 months, 62 patients have been provided food from our food pantry

## Strong Internal Medicine Food Pantry



### About Strong Internal Medicine

- A level 3 Patient Centered Medical Home
- Staffed by faculty physicians, resident physicians, and advanced practice providers
- Designated safety net practice with a multidisciplinary team to address gaps in care
- Serves approximately 12,000 patients

## Food Insecurity Screener

Food Insecurity

Patient refused all

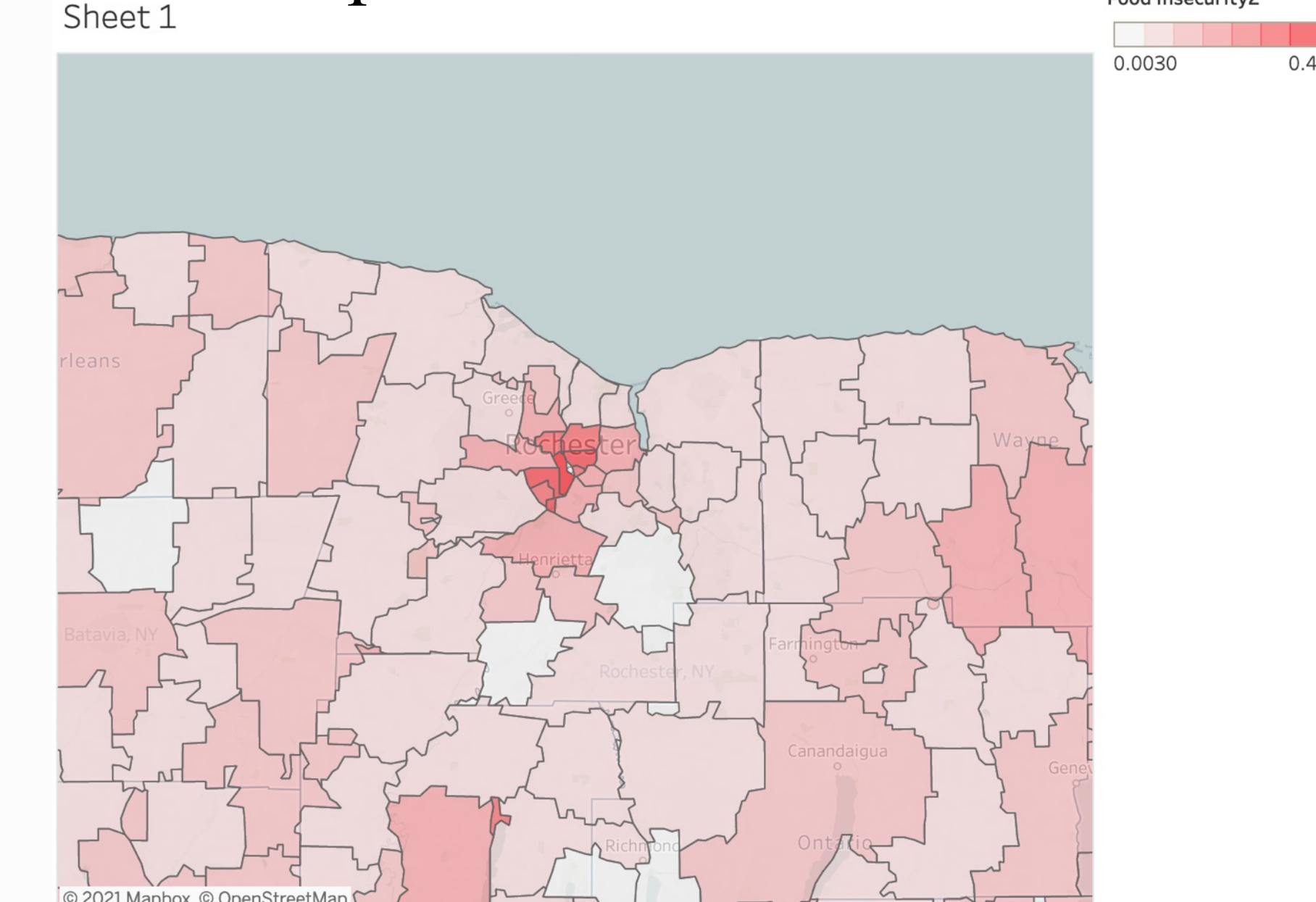
Within the past 12 months, you worried that your food would run out before you got money to buy more.

Never true Sometimes true Often true Patient refused

Within the past 12 months, the food you bought just didn't last and you didn't have money to get more.

Never true Sometimes true Often true Patient refused

## Distribution of Food Insecurity in Upstate New York



## Conclusions and Next Steps

Patients may normalize food insecurity unless directly questioned.

Electronic health record can be utilized to screen patients for food insecurity and prompt dissemination of local resources.

Establishing an on-site emergency food pantry in the outpatient setting can be a helpful resource for patients.

The University of Rochester Medical Center has since formed a partnership with Foodlink, a Rochester-based nonprofit organization dedicated to ending hunger, that will begin April 1, 2021

Next steps include: expanding workflow to additional ambulatory clinics and inpatients, assessing metrics of physical health in patients who are screened as food insecure, and increasing usage of screening tools in our primary care practice

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