

Title: An exploration of ProduceRx experiences and impact among low-income individuals with uncontrolled diabetes in California

Background: Poor diet and nutrition are a main predictors of diabetes prevalence and outcomes. Low-income individuals disproportionately experience food insecurity and diabetes. Emerging evidence from food prescription programs demonstrate that consumption of nutritious foods and diet improves diabetes management. However, little is known about the impact of these programs among low-income individuals with uncontrolled diabetes. The Kaiser Permanente Southern California (KPSC) ProduceRx program, a clinical trial, provided free weekly produce deliveries and tele-nutritional counseling to low-income individuals with uncontrolled diabetes for 24 weeks. ProduceRx demonstrated positive outcomes, including improved blood sugar levels among participants.

Objective: This study aimed to explore participants' experiences with ProduceRx and identify factors that contributed to success and recommendations for improvement.

Methods: ProduceRx participants were recruited from the KPSC. Eligibility required being an adult MediCal beneficiary with diabetes diagnosis and an HbA1c of 8.0 or higher. Using purposive sampling method, we identified ProduceRx participants who participated in semi structured one-on-one interviews. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was used to identify the codes and themes that emerged from the data.

Results: We interviewed 14 participants. Overall, participants' description of ProduceRx was positive, they described a positive impact on their overall health, household, and lifestyle. Factors that contributed to the consumption of the produce delivered were also identified. Four main themes emerged from the analysis: 1) Produce deliveries improved overall health and benefited the entire household; 2) Access to produce improved cooking and dietary habits in addition to diabetes self-management; 3) Additional nutritional education contributed to knowledge and understanding of diabetes; 4) Accounting for cultural factors and individual dietary preference are crucial for successful food prescription programs.

Conclusion: Findings from this study showed ProduceRx benefits beyond diabetes management and identified factors for program success. Future research on sustainability of clinical benefits is recommended.