

Home-Delivered Medically Tailored Meal Engagement Among Hemodialysis Patients and Providers

Abstract

Objective: Hemodialysis patients face one of the most difficult diets among clinical patient populations. Furthermore, dialysis dietary adherence is generally reported as low with providers generally lacking the time and resources to implement effective behavior change. The purpose of this study was to elucidate measures of patient and provider engagement with home-delivered medically tailored meals (MTMs).

Methods: We surveyed patients and staff at dialysis centers within the Denver metropolitan area. Surveys focused on 1) patient dietary intake, 2) awareness, support, and utilization of meal programs, and 3) nutritional challenges and barriers (including food security).

Results: We surveyed 118 patients (mean age 61.0 ± 14.2 year, 58.5% male, and dialysis vintage of 4.6 ± 4.9 years) and 26 staff across the included dialysis facilities. Patients were 20.3% White/Non-Hispanic, 35.6% Hispanic/Latin, and 31.4% Black/African American. Most patients reported eating 2 meals per day ($N = 53$, 44.9%) and 52.2% reported difficulty with following a kidney diet. The most cited reasons for not following the diet were behavioral or knowledge (38.5%), taste (26.3%), time/convenience (26.9%) and food autonomy (16.9%). Sixty participants (52.2%) reported living in a food desert and 26.3% reported food insecurity. Seventy-one patients (61.2%) were aware of MTMs but only 40.5% had been referred. Most (76.9%) dialysis providers were aware of MTMs but only 15 (57.7%) had actually referred patients to such a service. Black individuals were less likely to be referred for MTMs than White or Hispanics/Latin (29.7% vs 48.1% White and 45.0% Hispanic/Latin) individuals.

Conclusion: Medically tailored meals (MTMs) represent a potential method to alleviate or bypass some of the many barriers expressed by patients. Our findings reveal a critical need for education around MTMs for both patients and providers. Medically tailored meals (MTMs) could potentially demonstrate health kidney dietary patterns that might translate to altered dietary preferences or toward future behavior change.

Keywords: food insecurity; hemodialysis; medically tailored meals; nutrition.