

OCTOBER 2021

MALNUTRITION CONNECTION

Providing Malnutrition Awareness and Advocacy Information to Share

Pharmacists as Partners in Malnutrition Screening and Awareness

With their professional expertise, personal touch and opportunities for in-person interactions with older Americans, pharmacists are effective partners in providing malnutrition screening and information.



Alarming Rates of Nutrition Risk Found in Ohio Pharmacy Screening Pilot

A pilot project to identify the presence of nutrition risk in the underserved populations of Central Ohio found that a stunning 63% of patients were at risk.

Of the 221 patients screened at the Charitable Pharmacy of Central Ohio (CPCO), 84 (38%) patients were positive for food insecurity, 14 (6%) positive for malnutrition risk, and 42 (19%) positive for both. Patients at nutrition risk were connected to community resources, including food pantries, home-delivered meals, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The findings are reported in [a new study](#) published in the *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*. The study was performed using a [malnutrition screening tool](#) developed by the Ohio Malnutrition Prevention Workgroup. The tool is the first of its kind to screen for both food insecurity and malnutrition risk.

“The rate of nutrition risk we uncovered was alarming and is compounded by the fact that nutrition is an ‘invisible’ issue that doesn’t get nearly enough attention. We are now getting a sense of just how widespread the nutrition risk problem has become - particularly as we assess how badly communities are struggling with food access as part of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.”

- study co-author Jay Mirtallo, Faculty Emeritus within Ohio State University’s College of Pharmacy

Providing Malnutrition Screening and Information at Flu Vaccine Appointments

The Irish Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism (IrSPEN), supported by the Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute (INDI), has called for a [pilot program](#) integrating a five-minute nutrition screening for people over the age of 70 as part of their seasonal flu vaccine appointment.

Here in the US, as many older Americans receive their annual flu vaccine at their local pharmacy, the flu vaccine appointment could also serve as an ideal time for pharmacy staff to conduct a quick nutrition screening - like the Ohio pilot project highlighted in this newsletter - or to hand out information on the risk of malnutrition among older Americans.



ASPIEN’s [Ask About Your Nutrition Poster](#) could be used as a handout to give to older adults when they receive the flu vaccine. Think about how you can partner with pharmacies in your network to make this happen in your state or community to help raise awareness.

Check out [this blog](#) on the International Council on Active Aging (ICAA) blog website discussing the importance of good nutrition to support vaccine effectiveness. “Malnutrition has been identified as a factor that may contribute to diminished vaccine response in older adults.” “Older adults with poor food intake or who have compromised health may need additional support to meet their nutrition needs. Oral nutritional supplements (ONS) can provide protein, vitamins, and minerals to help maintain immune health. Older adults (and their families and caregivers) can talk to healthcare providers to find out more about how they might benefit from ONS products.”