

Food Insecurity Screening Amongst College Students: Addressing Student Needs

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Introduction & Significance

- **Food Insecurity (FI):** Inadequate access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food.
- **Global Impact:** Affects 38-48% of university students in some countries.
- **US Prevalence:** High rates (32.9-50.9%) among college students.
- **Vulnerability:** 29% of undergraduates are first-generation or low-income.
- **Local Need:** Unstandardized food insecurity screening in college students may lead to under-identification.
- **Consequences:** FI negatively impacts student health and academic performance.

Methods

- **Search Strategy:** Systematic search (Aug-Sep 2024) in PubMed, CINAHL, Embase.
- **Study Selection:** Articles were screened based on predefined criteria (college-aged, FI screening, publication year).
- **Synthesis:** Findings on FI screening in college and healthcare settings were synthesized.



Discussion

- **Improved Identification:** Standardized FI screening at college health centers likely enhances the identification of food-insecure students, mirroring successes in other primary care settings.
- **Addressing Disparities:** A standardized approach can promote equitable identification and support for racial groups with higher FI rates.
- **Recommended Tools:** Consider implementing validated brief tools like the USDA 2 or 6-item screeners, the NSS, or the more comprehensive 10-item FSSM for optimal accuracy.
- **Implementation Strategies:** Comprehensive training for clinic staff on the significance of FI screening, proper tool administration, and a multi-faceted approach to resource delivery (on-campus and community) is essential.

Objective & Practice Question

- **Objective:** To explore the effects of standardized vs. unstandardized food insecurity screening among college students and screener tools to adopt in the future.
- **Practice Question:** Does standardized screening improve the percentage of completed screenings at college or university health centers.

Results: Synthesis of Evidence

- **Prevalence:** Significant, ranges from 24% to 43%.
- **High-Risk Groups:** Up to 74% prevalence in some college populations.
- **Racial Disparities:** Higher rates among Non-Hispanic Black (43%), Non-Hispanic Asian (35%), and Hispanic/Latino students (35%).
- **Patient Perception:** Majority (83.9%) of primary care patients value FI screening.
- **Effective Screening Tools:**
 - ✓ 2-item Nutrition Security Screener (NSS).
 - ✓ USDA 2-item and 6-item screeners.
 - ✓ 10-item FSSM with a 2-item screener.
- **Screening Impact:** Standardization is associated with increased screening rates.

Conclusion & Call to Action

- Food insecurity is a critical college health concern.
- Standardizing FI screening among college students is a vital step towards improved identification and student well-being.
- **Recommendation:** College or university health centers should adopt a standardized FI screening protocol and establish robust support resources within primary care settings.
- Further research is needed to determine the most effective tools and implementation strategies.



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