

Cystic Fibrosis Research News

Title:

Clinical Features Associated with Self-Reported Food Insecurity in People with Cystic Fibrosis

Lay Title:

Clinical characteristics of people with CF experiencing food insecurity

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What was your research question?

Is food insecurity associated with worse health outcomes and more severe lung disease in people with CF?

Why is this important?

Food insecurity is an important health problem, affecting millions of American families. People who are food insecure have limited access to nutritious and safe foods. Food insecurity is also more common in people with CF compared to the general population. It is important for people with CF to have access to high calorie foods because low weight in CF is associated with worse health outcomes. Very few studies have looked at the relationship between food insecurity and health outcomes in CF.



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What did you do?

We used data from the Health Insurance Survey, which was completed in 2019. This survey was given to people with CF and parents of children with CF, and it included questions about food insecurity. People were given the option to link their answers to their information in the CF Foundation Patient Registry, including clinical information such as lung function, medications, CF complications (like diabetes), weight, height, BMI, and hospitalizations. We linked their survey answers to their information in the Registry to see what clinical outcomes were associated with food insecurity.

What did you find?

Of the people who answered the survey, 28.5% were food insecure. Food insecurity was significantly more common in Black and Hispanic people with CF and those on Medicaid or Medicare. Food insecurity was associated with lower lung function and more hospitalizations. However, after considering other factors linked with food insecurity, lung function was no longer significant, indicating that these other factors affect both food insecurity and lung function. There was still a significant link between food insecurity and more hospitalizations. We did not see a connection between food insecurity and signs of low nutrition.

What does this mean and reasons for caution?

Similar to other studies, we found that food insecurity is more common in people with CF compared to the general population. Our findings highlight the link between food insecurity and worse health outcomes in people with CF, and they support the importance of screening for food insecurity in people with CF. However, people who answered our survey only represent a part of the CF population, not the entire CF population. Our results also do not show that food insecurity directly *causes* worse health outcomes, only that there is a connection between them.

What's next?

More studies are needed to look more closely at how food insecurity relates to health outcomes, to study a more diverse population of CF patients, and to study how screening for food insecurity during routine visits affects patients and their health.

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