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Rx for Food Security:

Helping Address a Critical Social Determinant of Health in San Diego

Sharp HealthCare and San Diego Hunger Coalition release new curriculum for health care providers.

San Diego, September 24, 2019 – San Diego Hunger Coalition and Sharp HealthCare have partnered to release a new Continuing Medical Education curriculum that will prepare medical professionals **to incorporate food insecurity screening and food assistance referrals into their patient care plans**. This four-part series of certified Continuing Medical Education (CME) courses is free and [available online](#) for health care professionals and the general public.

The new CME courses build upon San Diego Hunger Coalition’s work with numerous partners over the past 6 years to integrate screening and food assistance resources into healthcare settings; all of which is summarized on the Hunger Coalition’s website (sdhunger.org/healthcare).

Sharp HealthCare’s work to integrate food security into the patient care experience is part of a national movement towards whole person care by addressing social determinants of health, or **conditions in which people live, learn, work, and play that affect their overall health**. Social determinants of health include but are not limited to access to care and health insurance, housing stability, and **economic security, the latter of which includes food security**.

Studies show that patients are more likely to seek food assistance when it is seen as a health goal and part of the patient care visit. Unfortunately, very few medical school curriculums incorporate education around nutrition or food insecurity, leaving many practitioners unsure of where to start. **The CME courses developed by San Diego Hunger Coalition and Sharp HealthCare will fill this gap**.

This curriculum is a direct response to the Hospital Association of San Diego & Imperial Counties Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) process, a collaborative of hospitals throughout San Diego (including Sharp), which for the past six years has focused on the connection between health conditions (e.g., chronic diseases, behavioral health) and social determinants of health. The CHNA has repeatedly identified food insecurity as a critical social determinant of health impacting San Diegans.

“Sharp HealthCare is a national leader in this work, and we applaud their commitment to the most difficult part, which is effectively connecting patients to food assistance when needed,” says Anahid Brakke, Executive Director of San Diego Hunger Coalition. *“We encourage other healthcare systems and providers to utilize Sharp’s CME curriculum, or work with us to tailor a version for their own healthcare environments, thereby ensuring that access to food is no longer a barrier to good health.”*

Food insecurity is the lack of access to enough food to lead a healthy and active life. **Living in a food insecure household can have lasting consequences**. Food insecure adults are:

- 47% more likely to visit an emergency room.
- 47% more likely to be admitted to a hospital.
- Likely to spend 54% more days in a hospital than food secure peers.
- At TWICE the risk of developing type 2 diabetes even after accounting for differences in age, gender, race, smoking, alcohol use, diet, and physical activity.

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San Diego Hunger Coalition leads coordinated action to end hunger in San Diego County supported by research, education and advocacy. San Diego Hunger Coalition has served San Diego communities since 1974.

At Sharp HealthCare, our mission is to improve the health of those we serve with a commitment to excellence in all that we do. Our goal is to offer quality care and services that set community standards, exceed patients' expectations, and are provided in a caring, convenient, cost-effect and accessible manner.

*For more information, please visit <http://www.sdhunger.org/healthcare>
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