



Health Care  Food



August 2025 Newsletter

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Advancing food is medicine through research, policy and partnerships

This month we're excited to spotlight the energy building across Health Care by Food's research, advocacy and education efforts, reflecting on the initiative's growing influence in shaping a future where healthy food is a standard part of clinical care. From groundbreaking research projects such as a study on how produce prescriptions influence patient consumption of nutrient dense fruits and vegetables, to engaging in strategic partnerships at the National Conference of State Legislatures and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Annual Legislative Conference, our work continues to demonstrate that healthy food can be a powerful health care intervention and therapy for healing and prevention.

None of this progress happens in isolation. Partnerships across many diverse sectors are the connective tissue that brings food is medicine to life. By aligning science with supportive policy and collaborative implementation, we are building a pathway to scale.

I invite you to join us at a dynamic upcoming convening, register for one of our behavioral science webinars, participate in our food is medicine pitch competition (**note below registration due September 5th**) or submit an innovative abstract. Together, we'll not just change systems, we'll change lives.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Lisa'.



Lisa D. Sanders
National Executive Director
Health Care by Food

HCXF research grantee spotlight: Identifying elements of produce prescriptions to enhance patient redemption



(Center for Nutrition and Health Impact)

As a food is medicine (FIM) intervention, produce prescriptions (PRx) offer health care professionals an opportunity to help treat, manage and prevent diet-related health risks or conditions by prescribing fruits and vegetables to patients who may not have access to nutritious food.

PRx programs have been associated with [significant improvements](#) in fruit and vegetable intake, food security and health status for both adults and children (specifically, clinically relevant improvements in glycated hemoglobin, blood pressure and body mass index for adults with poor cardiometabolic health.) Yet a PRx does not necessarily translate directly into significantly increased patient consumption of nutrient dense fruits and vegetables. [For example, many studies](#) have found that PRx or vouchers for fresh fruits and vegetables vary in redemption and usage rates.

To identify factors that may influence the redemption rates of PRx, [Health Care by Food™](#) awarded a research grant to evaluate the intervention characteristics, implementation strategies and contexts associated with high levels of patient engagement so that PRx programs might be structured more effectively. This secondary analyses, *Linking Programmatic and Contextual Factors with Improved Food is Medicine Engagement Across the U.S.*, has been led by **Christopher Long, PhD**, at the **Center for Nutrition and Health Impact (CNHI)** with the team of **Eric Calloway, PhD, RD, Bailey Houghtaling, PhD, RD, Victoria Zigmont, PhD, MPH, Elise Mitchell, MS MPH** and **Gabrielle Talavera, BSE**.

The study involved combining national project-level and participant-level core metrics data from the federal **Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP)**—a key funding mechanism for PRx programs—with new quantitative and qualitative data from program leaders. Specifically, the CNHI team collected detailed data about intervention characteristics and implementation strategies from more than 100 GusNIP projects across the U.S. from April through September of 2024. They used this data to identify program characteristics, strategies and contexts associated with high levels of participant redemption and engagement. (CNHI serves as the lead evaluation partner for GusNIP, overseeing the Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation and Information (NTAE) Center.)

Preliminary quantitative and qualitative findings indicate:

- Several individual program design features were associated—some positively and negatively, with redemption data and participant outcomes.
- Offering added services, such as nutrition education, may promote redemption and engagement, possibly through food and nutrition skill building and increasing the perceived value of the program to the participants.
- Strong data-sharing relationships among implementing partner organizations can help with program monitoring and early identification of challenges and inform program adaptations.

“This study is unique in that it brings together data from dozens of produce prescription programs from across the country to identify intervention components that program leaders have implemented to improve community members’ ability to engage with their programs.” Long said. “We still have a lot to learn, but this kind of design-focused research is increasingly important as food is medicine programs are adopted in more settings.”

Qualitative findings include aspects of PRx program development and implementation that affect

redemption. For example, PRx program leaders consistently emphasized the importance of listening to participants and prioritizing participants' needs and preferences when designing and implementing PRx programs. This just published paper details the qualitative analysis: [Participant Redemption and Engagement in Produce Prescription Programs: A Qualitative Analysis of Implementer Perspectives - ScienceDirect](#).

"The program leaders highlighted the ongoing benefits of designing their programs with participants' experience in mind," Calloway said. "They pointed out the importance of giving participants a choice of foods, taking time to build trust with participants and other practical tips to engage participants and make it easy for them to benefit from the program."

Another forthcoming publication will detail the quantitative data and recommendations. Meanwhile, [Best Practices for Implementing a Produce Prescription Project](#) is now available online at the [GusNIP Nutrition Incentive Hub](#) website. The Best Practices report shares learnings from surveys and interviews with PRx program leaders addressing questions about how to structure programs and how to encourage participants to redeem their incentives and maintain engagement.

Join Health Care by Food at the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference in September



(American Heart Association)

Health Care by Food™ (HCXF) will participate in this year's Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Annual Legislative Conference from September 24-26 in Washington, DC at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. This annual event, attended by thousands of lawmakers, policymakers and advocates, offers a key opportunity for HCXF to increase awareness about the importance of food is medicine. We will host a dynamic exhibit booth beginning on Wednesday, September 24th, and the following events on Thursday, September 25th:

- Featured panel discussion: **What is Food is Medicine? How Healthy Food through Health Care Can Address Chronic Disease?*** 1:00-2:00pm ET, room 206.
 - Speakers include: U.S. Sen. Cory Booker (N.J.) (invited); Elizabeth Yee, Executive Vice President, The Rockefeller Foundation; Kevin Volpp, Scientific Lead, Health Care by Food; moderated by Lisa Sanders, National Executive Director, Health Care by Food
- **Heart-healthy cooking demonstrations** at the Exhibit Hall Culinary Stage**
- **Two fireside chats** at the Culinary Stage:
 - Fireside Chat: **The Human Perspective of Food is Medicine: Patient Stories**** 11:00-12:00PM ET
 - Members of the Health Care by Food's Lived Experience Task Force will share their stories, perspectives and insights on how FIM has impacted their lives.
 - Fireside Chat: **State of the Plate: Food is Medicine in Action**** 3:00-4:00PM ET
 - Learn how successful, evidence-based FIM programs are being implemented on the ground and how stakeholders are coming together to address implementation challenges from a panel of implementers.

* Requires conference registration. Note conference registration prices increase after September 5th.

** Free and open to the public; located in the Exhibit Hall at the Culinary Stage in the Walter E. Washington Convention Center.

Announcing: Food is medicine oral pitch contest—
Pitch your \$10M idea at the Association's Scientific
Sessions!



Brent Ling of the National Produce Prescription Collaborative discusses his ideas at a Health Care by Food systems convening. *(Michael Monti)*

Please join Health Care by Food (HCXF) for the **American Heart Association's annual Scientific Sessions** in New Orleans November 7-10th for the premier global exchange of the latest scientific advancements, research and evidence-based clinical practice updates in cardiovascular science.

HCXF will have an expanded presence at Sessions this year with a dynamic FIM pavilion. We invite FIM researchers to participate in a **fast-paced, high impact pitch competition**. In just three minutes, without slides or electronic media, participants will address the question:

"If you had \$10 million, what would you do to maximize impact in FIM research?"

Presentations should clearly convey the vision to a non-specialist audience, demonstrating clarity, creativity and potential real-world impact. Pitches will be evaluated by members of the HCXF team, with additional scoring from live audience voting.

Awards:

- 1st place: \$200 gift card
- 2nd place: \$100 gift card
- 3rd place: \$50 gift card

Key dates:

- **September 5, 2025:** Pitch contest registration closes
 - **October 3, 2025:** Finalists who are selected to pitch are announced and will present live during Scientific Sessions 2025 in New Orleans
-

Register [here](#) for the HCXF pitch competition at the Association's Scientific Sessions

How states are driving innovation in food is medicine



Kevin Volpp, Amanda Cassel Kraft and Massachusetts State Senator Julian Cyr participated in a panel discussion on food is medicine during the National Conference of State Legislatures 2025 Annual Legislative Summit. *(American Heart Association)*

With FIM evolving as an impactful strategy to improve diet-related chronic disease, more states are considering tools, such as Medicaid 1115 waivers, to help integrate nutrition into health care and pave the way for lasting policy change. In support of this, the American Heart Association and [Health Care by Food](#)[™] hosted an exhibit booth and a FIM learning lab at the **National Conference of State Legislatures Annual Legislative Conference** in Boston earlier this month.

State legislators from across the country attended the presentation to learn about the Association's FIM priorities. The learning hub provided an opportunity to educate lawmakers about the importance of expanding the evidence base, strategies for testing interventions and what early evidence shows, as well as ways that states can support pilot programs leading to policy solutions.

"Medicaid 1115 waivers are an important tool for building an evidence-based approach to food is medicine," said Kevin Volpp, MD, PhD, scientific lead of Health Care by Food and founding director of the Center for Health Incentives and Behavioral Economics at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine and the Wharton School. "The Association's Health

Care by Food initiative is working to generate evidence and tools to help the health care sector design and scale programs that prescribe nutritious food for the treatment, management and prevention of chronic disease.”

Other speakers included Amanda Cassel Kraft, chief operating officer of Commonwealth Care Alliance and former Massachusetts Medicaid director, and Massachusetts State Senator Julian Cyr, chair of the Joint Committee on Housing and vice chair of the Joint Committee on Public Health. (See below for future state legislative events.)

Health Care by Food will continue engaging with national policy associations like the National Conference of State Legislatures to elevate FIM in national policy conversations, educate and build relationships with key policymakers and lay the groundwork for a long-term FIM advocacy movement.

Register for Septembers Behavioral Science webinars:

The graphic is a promotional poster for a webinar. It features a yellow and green background with a red border. On the left, there are two circular portraits: the top one is of Kevin L. Keller, PhD, MBA, and the bottom one is of Punam Keller, PhD, MBA. The text on the right includes the title 'Branding Your Program & Intervention: Why and How', the date and time 'Sep 2nd, 2025 | 3:30 - 4:30 pm ET', and the names of the speakers and host. A QR code is located in the bottom right corner, with a 'Scan to Register' button below it. The 'Health Care by Food' logo is in the top right corner.

Speaker
Kevin L. Keller, PhD, MBA

Host
Punam Keller, PhD, MBA

Upcoming Webinar

Health Care  Food

**Branding
Your Program &
Intervention:
Why and How**

Sep 2nd, 2025 | 3:30 - 4:30 pm ET

Speakers
Kevin L. Keller, PhD, MBA

Host
Punam Keller, PhD, MBA

Scan to Register

Organizations of all types are recognizing and appreciating the power of branding. This talk will outline some of the benefits of branding and its rationale, before providing specific guidelines in terms of branding “do’s and don’ts” to ensure that organizations derive maximum value from their branding efforts. Specific attention will be paid to food is medicine applications. This is part of a series of behavioral sciences webinars open to all focused on healthy food marketing and consumer choice. To register, please click [here](#).

Speaker
Pierre Chandon, PhD

Upcoming Webinar
Customer-Centric Interventions for Healthier Eating

Health Care Food

Sep 15th, 2025 | 3:30 – 4:30 pm ET

Speakers
Pierre Chandon, PhD

Host
Julio Sevilla, PhD, MBA

Host
Julio Sevilla, PhD, MBA

Scan to Register

Because healthy eating is more a "wanting" or "doing" than a "knowing" problem, pleasure-based interventions that motivate people to eat better, or stealthily reduce portion sizes, tend to be more effective than interventions that focus on providing information. To register, please click [here](#).



Abstract submission deadline October 16, 2025

Epidemiology and Prevention | Lifestyle and Cardiometabolic Health

March 17–20, 2026

Sheraton Boston | Boston, Massachusetts

[EPI|Lifestyle 2026](#) is the American Heart Association's premier global forum for research in population science, epidemiology and lifestyle medicine. Share your work in a dynamic, abstract-driven program highlighting innovations in equitable health, implementation science and cardiovascular health. Join other researchers to discuss your science, spark new collaborations and contribute to the evidence that shapes public health. [Submit Today!](#)

Upcoming Events

Health Care by Food at the [Council of State Governments West Annual Meeting](#)
September 16-17, 2025 | Jackson Hole, WY

Health Care by Food at the [Congressional Black Caucus Foundation](#)
September 24-28, 2025 | Washington, DC

Tufts 3rd Annual [Food is Medicine National Summit](#)
October 8-9, 2025 | Boston, MA and Virtual

[American Heart Association Scientific Sessions](#)
November 7-10, 2025 | New Orleans, Louisiana

Publications

[Social Determinants of Health and Mortality in Cardiovascular-Kidney-Metabolic Syndrome - ScienceDirect](#) Oluwabunmi Ogungbe PhD, MPH, BNSc, RN

[Food Is Medicine: Prioritizing Equitable Implementation | AJPH | Vol. 115 Issue 9](#) Kelseanna Hollis-Hansen PhD, MPH

[A Novel Culinary Medicine Service Line: Practical Strategy for Food as Medicine | NEJM Catalyst](#) Jaclyn Albin, MD, CCMS, DipABLM

[Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' Food As Medicine Strategic Roadmap - Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](#)

Perspectives

[Nudging Populations Toward Better Health | The Regulatory Review](#)
Kevin Volpp, MD, PhD

Reports

[Maximizing the impact of nutrition interventions with local food procurement](#)
Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation, Harvard Law School
