

Prescription for Health

Patient and Farmers' Market Outcomes



PRESCRIPTION *for* HEALTH

Funded by the Kresge Foundation and coordinated by Washtenaw County Public Health, the Prescription for Health program connects the medical system and the food sector by creating a relationship between clinic staff, their patients, and the local farmers' market. Health care providers write "prescriptions" for their patients to eat more fruits and vegetables.

Participants receive **\$40** in tokens to spend like cash at two local farmers' markets, as well as nutrition education and support during market visits.

In 2011, **311** patients from five local health clinics participated in the program. These patients spent **\$5,967** on fresh fruits and vegetables at the markets, improving their access to produce and providing local farmers with increased income.

Key Findings:

- The average daily consumption of fruits and vegetables of program participants **increased by nearly one cup per day** from pre- to post-program (mean=0.7, p<.001)
- **98%** of patients who visited the farmers' market at least once stated they were likely to visit the market again in the future
- **96%** of participants agreed that visiting the farmers' market helped them or their family members eat more fruits and vegetables
- **91%** of participants agreed that eating more fruits and vegetables would help them manage their health condition(s) better
- **73%** of participants reported knowing that a Bridge/EBT card (food stamps) could be used at the farmers' market post-program, compared with only 25% pre-program

Participant Demographics:

- **73%** female
- **44%** African American, **44%** White, **1%** Asian, **4%** Hispanic/Latino and **7%** identified as two or more races or other
- Average age **44**
- **56%** reported having at least one child living in their household

Participants were at high risk for food insecurity:

- **74%** had a yearly income of less than \$15,000
- **62%** had cut the size of meals or skipped meals within the past year because of a lack of money for food
- **62%** use a Bridge/EBT card
- **61%** had not shopped at the Downtown Ypsilanti Farmers' Market and **78%** had not shopped at the Westside Farmers' market before the program

*Special thanks to our clinic and farmers' market partners:
Neighborhood Family Health Center, Packard Health, The Corner Health Center, New Hope Outreach Clinic, the Downtown Ypsilanti Farmers' Market (run by Growing Hope) and Westside Farmers' Market.*

How the program worked:

Clinic staff identified patients for the program based on food access difficulties, chronic disease risk, and interest. Using a Prescription for Health “prescription” card, staff indicated the patient’s health issues and goals for healthier eating.

When a patient came to the Prescription for Health table at the farmers’ market, Washtenaw County Public Health (WCPH) staff reviewed his/her prescription card and provided nutrition education and support accordingly. WCPH staff offered recipes featuring a fruit or vegetable currently available at the market and other nutrition-related materials.



After the educational support, the patient would exchange one of his or her coupons for \$10 in tokens to spend on produce at the farmers’ market.

The Prescription for Health table shared the same space as EBT/Bridge card registration and Double Up Food Bucks at the farmers’ markets, making referrals to these services easy and seamless.

Clinic staff outcomes:

Clinic staff reported that the program was personally rewarding, and staff liked being able to provide tangible access to healthy food. After the program ended, staff indicated **they are now more likely to refer patients to the farmers’ market.**

“[The program] raises awareness that the farmers’ market can be a really great resource for low-income populations. [There is a] common misperception that farmers’ markets are for the wealthy.”

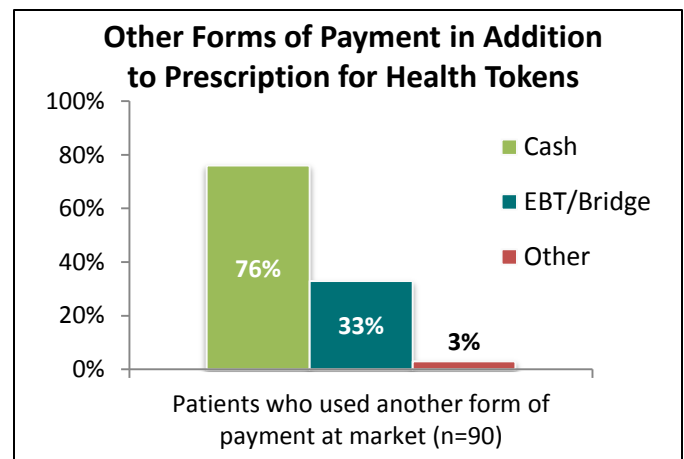
-Clinic Staff Member

Program results:

Program participants visited the farmers’ markets an average of two times, with **65%** of participants visiting the market at least once. In total, program participants visited the two participating farmers’ markets **605** times.

Post-program survey results were obtained from **67%** of program participants after the end of the market season.

Of the patients who visited the market at least once, **61%** used another form of payment to make purchases at the market (see table below).



Comments regarding the farmers’ markets were overwhelmingly positive. Participants liked the idea of **purchasing local foods and supporting farmers within their community.** They also commented on the **friendly and helpful nature of the vendors** and the **quality of the produce.**

Participants indicated the most common reasons for not visiting the market were transportation issues and market days/times not suitable.

“[This program] actually got me down to the farmers’ market more often. It was a good time just to walk through the market.”

-Clinic Patient

“[The farmers’ market is a] great network of people! The farmers were very helpful, very much like a family.”

-Clinic Patient