

Nutrition, HIV, and Aging

Over the weekend, the New York Times (NYT) published a thought-provoking article entitled [People Think It's Over: Spared Death, People with HIV Struggle to Live](#). It profiled aging members of the HIV community who are living to see the intersection of the virus and the aging process. Many noted challenges including multiple medical conditions, food insecurity, isolation and depression. Despite the huge strides made in the treatment of HIV, which cannot be overstated, it remains a complex chronic illness that deeply affects a person's physical and emotional health. The reality is that many people living with HIV are still struggling; the condition has changed, but it is far from over. This resonated for me as I reflected on the population we serve at God's Love. Nearly 50% of our clients with HIV are 55 years or older. The article also mentioned issues addressed by our food and nutrition program; this prompted me to write a Letter to the Editor of the NYT (unpublished at this time), calling attention to the power of food as medicine in the care of people with HIV.

Here is the letter:

As anyone profiled in 'People Think It's Over' can tell you, life with HIV/AIDS isn't easy. Poor access to food and nutrition services makes the situation more challenging. Maintaining good nutrition is paramount as many conditions related to HIV and aging are positively affected by nutrition.

Research demonstrates that access to food and nutrition services support successful engagement in health care. The food insecure are less likely to keep medical appointments, take medications and benefit from nutrition's help in alleviating side effects.

Food and nutrition services reduce isolation. Whether sharing a congregate supper or receiving a home-delivered meal from a caring individual, food brings much more than only nutrients.

In today's healthcare environment, food and nutrition services are an inexpensive way to maintain optimal health and well-being. These services contribute substantially to improved health outcomes for PLWHA. That's why, at God's Love We Deliver, we believe that food is medicine.

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