

Evaluating partnerships between MU Extension and local healthcare providers; identifying potential opportunities

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Introduction

- Medical care and treatment are an important piece of our overall health and well-being, but community-based programs are often overlooked as an asset to the interdisciplinary approach to healthcare
- For this study we sought to determine if **(Aim 1)** MU Extension specialists were successfully connected to local healthcare and **(Aim 2)** to determine if local healthcare providers were interested in developing a referral process
- MU Extension Nutrition and Health programs improve population health by allowing participants to improve strength and coordination, maintain independence, and enjoy better quality of life¹.

Participants and Methods

- 48 total participants: MU Extension Nutrition and Health specialists (N=19) and healthcare providers (N=29) completed an online survey
- Healthcare providers were asked about their familiarity with MU Extension's Nutrition and Health programs
- MU Extension specialists were asked if they tracked patients who had successfully completed a course
- Connections between healthcare providers and MU Extension were assessed

Results and Conclusions

Aim 1 – to determine if MU Extension specialists were successfully connected to local healthcare

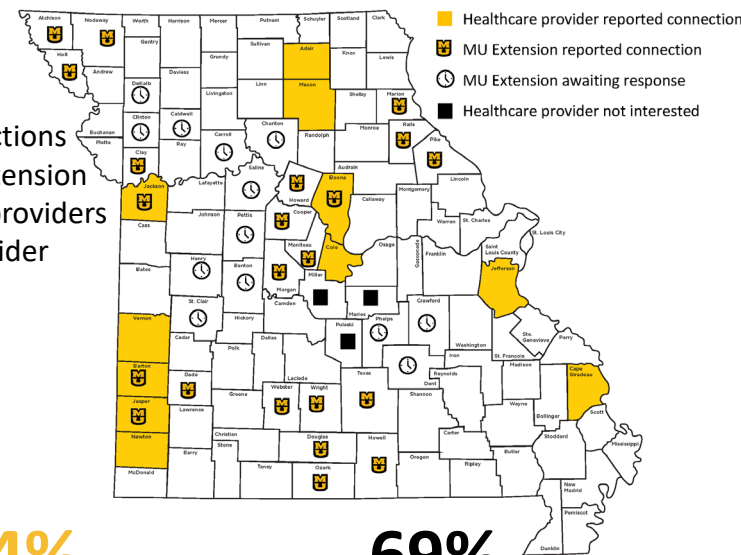


Figure 1. Connections between MU Extension and healthcare providers (healthcare provider N=10; Extension specialist N=19)

Aim 2 – to determine if local healthcare providers were interested in developing a referral process

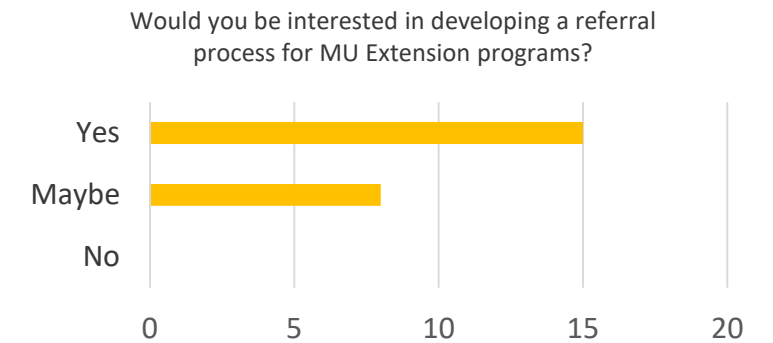


Figure 2. Question 39, addressed to healthcare providers (“Yes” N=15; “Maybe” N=8; “No” N=0)

44%

of healthcare respondents were aware of MU Extension Nutrition and Health programs

69%

have referred patients to an MU Extension Nutrition and Health program

60%

of physicians identified **time** as an obstacle for developing community partnerships

6.42/10

physicians' self-ranking of their knowledge of MU Extension Nutrition and Health programs

¹ Ball S, Gammon R, Kelly PJ, Cheng AL, Chertoff K, Kaume L, Abreu EL, Brotto M. Outcomes of Stay Strong, Stay Healthy in community settings. J Aging Health. 2013 Dec;25(8):1388-97. DOI: 10.1177/0898264313507318. Epub 2013 Oct 22. PMID: 24150062.

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Key Findings

In Missouri, there is a need and want for community-based programs and healthcare providers are open and accepting to a referral process and follow-up of program completers

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- Barriers to a referral process can be attributed to physician lack of time (60%) and knowledge of MU Extension programs (27%)
- Physicians (78%) do not track their patients after they have been referred to a class. Extension specialists currently don't have a long term follow up system for participants after they have successfully completed a program. This data suggests the need for an all-encompassing system for tracking patient success within community programs. Program referrals can be incentivized to providers by implementing outcome reporting and following up with patients that have completed programs
- Providers have suggested that referring patients would be easier if they could do so through patients' Electronic Health Records (EHR)
- 68% of providers who referred to outside resources didn't refer Extension programs. Other outside resources related to their condition include physical activity classes, grocery store tours, food pantries, etc. This number does not include referrals to other physicians or healthcare providers
- Physicians noted the importance and need of community health specialists and prevention programs due to the increased patient volumes and increased visits focused of preventative measures
- Exercise is Medicine encourages physicians to speak with their patients about physical activity and nutrition; developing referral relationships with community partners can benefit MU Extension, patients and providers
- Future studies can be done to measure the impact of these collaborations on the health of Missourians, which is one of MU Extension's grand challenges