



Project Open Hand™
meals with love

Food=Medicine

Pilot Study



FACT SHEET

In 2014, Project Open Hand is conducting our first-ever client-focused nutrition study in partnership with physicians and researchers from the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) School of Medicine.

Our Goal: Demonstrate that providing medically-tailored nutrition to people living with critical illness has a positive impact on their health and well-being, which in turn, can reduce medical costs.

The study will help position Project Open Hand at the forefront of research demonstrating the health care benefits of food and nutrition services (FNS). This will enable us to better serve our existing clients and expand to serve others, which in turn, attracts new partners and funding opportunities.

Methodology: Study participants will receive three meals a day for four-to-six months from Project Open Hand, meals that are tailored to meet 100% of their nutritional needs and integrated into their overall health care. The study will include up to 60 participants, clients who are mildly and severely symptomatic with HIV/AIDS, clients with diabetes, and clients with a dual diagnosis of HIV and diabetes.

In addition to nutritious meals, participants will receive intensive case management and enhanced nutritional counseling and education from Project Open Hand. Working with the UCSF research team, we will closely monitor their physical and mental health, doctor and emergency room visits, nutritional status and adherence to therapy.

Food is Medicine: A National Conversation

Our pilot study positions Project Open Hand as a leader in the growing, national conversation about food, nutrition and health care.

We're building on nutrition and health studies recently completed by our sister agencies in other regions – Community Servings in Boston, God's Love We Deliver in New York, and MANNA in Philadelphia.

The MANNA study showed clients eating healthy meals reduced their medical costs by 60%.



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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is Project Open Hand conducting this study?

We believe our pilot will demonstrate – what we know anecdotally – that three nutritious meals a day for people who are ill can markedly improve their health. And if our pilot study is a success, we will find the funding to expand this same service to others in our community who are ill and need three nutritious meals a day.

Are there successful models or studies that POH will follow?

Our research builds recent studies by our sister agencies, Community Servings in Boston, God's Love We Deliver in New York, and MANNA in Philadelphia.

MANNA's study, published in 2013, showed that clients eating healthy meals reduced their medical costs by 60%. Relative to the comparison group, MANNA clients' average monthly health costs were \$13,000 less, they had half the number of hospital visits, and when they were admitted to the hospital their length of stay was 37% shorter. Learn more by reading "[MANNA's Meal-Program Study Gets Medical Journal Backing.](#)" from *Philadelphia Magazine*, August 2013.

For our pilot study, Project Open Hand has engaged two physician-researchers who in 2012 published a study showing that inadequate access to nutritious food is associated with increased hospitalizations and emergency room visits among HIV-positive individuals. Their research highlights that ensuring patients have enough to eat needs to be a priority in the medical care and treatment of people with critical illness. Learn more by reading the August 2012 *San Francisco Chronicle* article, "[Better Food Seen as Key in AIDS Treatment.](#)"

How will POH measure the success of this project?

The goal of the pilot study is to demonstrate that good nutrition is a critical part of health care and that it provides appreciable benefits at modest cost. We will gauge our success by whether we see an improvement in the health of the participants, as well as a decrease in their medical expenses.

How can I support this effort?

The costs for this pilot study will be approximately \$120,000, which covers additional food costs, as well as research support and analysis of the findings. Please consider making a donation to Project Open Hand. www.openhand.org/donate

To learn more about how you can invest in the future of health and wellness, schedule a meeting with our Development Team by contacting Hannah Levinson at HLevinson@openhand.org or 415-447-2494.



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