



Project Open Hand™
meals with love

Food=Medicine Pilot Study



PRESS RELEASE

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Project Open Hand and UCSF Begin Food=Medicine Study

Pilot Study Aims to Demonstrate Healing Power of Nutritious Food for HIV and Diabetes

SAN FRANCISCO, July 10, 2014 – This week, 35 Bay Area residents living with HIV/AIDS or a dual diagnosis of HIV/AIDS and diabetes, will begin receiving three nutritious, medically-tailored meals daily as participants in [Project Open Hand's Food = Medicine Pilot Study](#).

The Food = Medicine study, conducted in collaboration with physicians and researchers at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) AIDS Research Institute, aims to demonstrate that good nutrition is an essential part of health care, particularly for people with critical illnesses.

“Compared to costly medical care, our nutritious meals are an inexpensive and effective intervention,” said Project Open Hand Executive Director Kevin Winge. “We believe this pilot study will demonstrate what we know anecdotally – that three nutritious meals a day for people who are ill can markedly improve their health, which in turn, significantly reduces the medical costs of treating their conditions. We are also excited about the buzz our study is generating in the growing, national conversation about ‘food is medicine.’”

Starting this week, the 35 HIV-infected 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. A further 25 individuals living with diabetes will also be engaged in the upcoming months. In addition to nutritious meals, participants will receive intensive case management and enhanced nutritional counseling and education from Project Open Hand.

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The UCSF research team will monitor participants' physical and mental health, frequency of doctor and emergency room visits, adherence to therapy and medical costs.

Dr. Sheri Weiser, Associate Professor of Medicine at the UCSF Division of HIV/AIDS at SF General Hospital, who is leading the evaluation of the study, said, "We know that inadequate access to nutritious food can lead to increased hospitalizations and emergency room visits among low income, HIV-positive individuals. We believe this study will help us to solidify the important connections between good nutrition and health care. By providing full nutritional support, we aim to show that when we address food insecurity and poor nutrition we improve the health and well-being of people who are critically ill."

The study results and analysis will be released in spring 2015.

The Food=Medicine research builds on a 2013 study by MANNA, a nonprofit in Philadelphia, which showed that critically ill clients eating healthy meals reduced their medical costs by over 60%.

People interested in supporting Project Open Hand and this pilot study are encouraged to make donations at www.openhand.org/donate.

About Project Open Hand

Project Open Hand is a nonprofit organization that provides meals with love to seniors and the critically ill. Every day, we prepare 2,500 nutritious meals and provide 200 bags of healthy groceries to help sustain our clients as they battle serious illnesses, isolation, or the health challenges of old age. We serve San Francisco and Alameda Counties, engaging more than 125 volunteers every day to nourish our community. Learn more at www.openhand.org.

About the AIDS Research Institute at UCSF

The [AIDS Research Institute \(ARI\) at UCSF](#) houses hundreds of scientists and dozens of programs throughout UCSF and affiliated labs and institutions, making ARI one of the largest AIDS research entities in the world. UCSF ranks #1 among medical schools in the U.S. for its AIDS programs according to *US News & World Report*, as it has every year since the category was created in 2001.

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