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**Community Servings Advances ‘Food Is Medicine’  
Movement with Publication of Study in *JAMA Internal Medicine***

*Researchers Report Fewer Hospital and Nursing Home Admissions, Along with  
16 Percent Drop in Medical Expenses, Among Recipients of Medically Tailored Meals*

**BOSTON** (April 22, 2019) – [Community Servings](#), a nonprofit provider of medically tailored meals and nutrition services to individuals and families living with critical and chronic illnesses, announced today the publication of a [study](#) in the peer-reviewed journal *JAMA Internal Medicine* that provides strong new evidence linking medically tailored meal interventions to improved health outcomes and lower medical costs for high-need, high-cost patients.

The rigorous study, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Evidence for Action program and utilizing Massachusetts’ insurance claims database, found that participation in a medically tailored meals program was associated with fewer hospital admissions and nursing home admissions, and less overall medical spending. The study estimated a 16.4 percent difference in average monthly medical costs (\$3,838 versus \$4,591) for individuals receiving meals from Community Servings.

“We are heartened to have such strong, new evidence of health benefits and cost savings associated with medically tailored meals programs,” said David B. Waters, CEO of Community Servings. “Given that diet and food security are central to preventing complications and improving health for those with costly chronic medical conditions, we hope that the impact of these outcomes will spur policymakers, providers and payers to support widespread adoption of the medically tailored meal delivery model.”

The study team was led by Dr. Seth A. Berkowitz, a physician and assistant professor at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine in Chapel Hill, N.C. Community Servings collaborated with researchers at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Mongan Institute at Massachusetts General Hospital.

The researchers linked data at the individual level from the 2011-2015 Massachusetts All Payer Claims Database with the meal delivery records of Community Servings, which prepares and



home-delivers meals tailored by registered dietitian nutritionists to recipients' medical condition. Community Servings provides 15 different meal plans that are culturally appropriate and customized into 50 diet combinations based on primary illness, comorbidities and medication regimens. Clients are referred to the program by a medical professional and receive a weekly home delivery of 10 medically tailored meals.

“The evidence that medically tailored meal delivery programs may be a useful intervention for vulnerable individuals continues to grow,” said Dr. Berkowitz. “The next step will be to test these interventions in randomized trials to help better understand in what situations medically tailored meal delivery programs should be used.”

The latest research is consistent with a 2018 [study](#), published in the journal *Health Affairs*, which was also led by Dr. Berkowitz and involved Community Servings' medically tailored meals and also found cost savings in the form of fewer emergency department visits and hospitalizations. The study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* features a larger-scale evaluation with a broader data set and even more rigorous research methodology than other studies to date.

The study is timely given changes in health care policy in Massachusetts and nationally. Beginning in January 2020, MassHealth Accountable Care Organizations will receive funds to reimburse for nutrition support services, including medically tailored meals, while Medicare Advantage Supplemental Benefits will also allow for reimbursement of home-delivered meals for individuals with complex chronic illnesses. The health insurer Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts recently began providing medically tailored meals from Community Servings to its Medicare Advantage members who need post-acute care for congestive heart failure.

The study abstract, titled *Association Between Receipt of a Medically Tailored Meal Program and Health Care Use*, is available from through the following web link:  
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/2730768>

### **About Community Servings**

Community Servings is a not-for-profit organization with a 29-year history of providing medically tailored meals and nutrition services to individuals and families coping with critical and chronic illnesses like HIV/AIDS, cancer, kidney disease, diabetes, heart disease, and others. Community Servings broke ground last year on a new “Food Campus” at its Jamaica Plain headquarters, a project supported by its \$10 million Food is the Foundation capital campaign. For more information, visit [www.servings.org](http://www.servings.org).

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