

## THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON FOOD ALLERGY FAMILIES

Melissa L Hearrell<sup>1</sup>, Xiaofan Huang<sup>2</sup>, Kristen A Staggers<sup>3</sup>, Carla M Davis<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Baylor College of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, Allergy and Immunology

<sup>2</sup> Baylor College of Medicine, Biostatistician, Dan L. Duncan Institute for Clinical and Translational Research

<sup>3</sup> Baylor College of Medicine, Senior Biostatistician, BCM Jewish Institute for Research

<sup>4</sup> Baylor College of Medicine, Professor of Pediatrics, Chief, Division of Immunology, Allergy, and Retrovirology

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**Background:** Food allergy families face unique challenges associated with modified activities of daily living and access to appropriate foods. It is important to understand how food allergy families were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Materials/Methods:** Food allergy caregivers completed an online survey regarding the impact of COVID-19 from 9/25/2020-1/15/2021. This survey was adapted from validated surveys The Chicago Food Allergy Research Surveys for Parents of Children with Food Allergy and The Johns Hopkins University Community Response Survey. The Wilcoxon rank-sum test, Kruskal-Wallis test, Fisher exact test, pairwise Fisher exact test, and pairwise Wilcoxon rank-sum test were used for analysis.

**Results:** Food allergy caregivers (n=312, 96% female, 75% non-Hispanic white) reported the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on their families. This impact manifested as problems with access to all food (45%) and allergen-free food (48%), increased stress (98%), increased discord within the home (72%), decreased household income (40%), increased reliance on processed foods (57%), changes in access to medical care (66%), and limited access to friends and family (94%). More caregivers with income <\$200,000 had financial stress (p<0.001) and lack of access to food (p=0.02) than caregivers with income>\$200,000.

**Conclusions:** Food allergy families have experienced significant changes in their daily lives due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes in access to food, household income, and access to medical care were observed in addition to increases in stress and discord with a reduction in traditional support networks.

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