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INTRODUCTION

## **Food Insecurity during the Time of COVID-19: Vulnerability, Health Conditions, and Taking Action**

David Himmelgreen<sup>a,b</sup> and Marilyn Stern<sup>c</sup>

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have begun to call for the need of a third dose (Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance [2021b](#)). This raises further questions of equity in the availability of vaccines for the global population (World Health Organization [2021](#)).

In addition to the direct impact of COVID-19 on global health, the pandemic has had a devastating impact on many aspects of daily life including the economy, education, politics, and social relationships. More specifically, it has

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a discussion on the role that COVID-19 and food insecurity have together in exacerbating poor health outcomes and to offer some suggestions for mitigating these effects now and in the future in preparation for future pandemics. The idea for this special issue came about in response to the University of South Florida's request for proposals for its COVID-19 Rapid Response Grant Program during the summer of 2020. Scholars and researchers from the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Behavioral and Community Sciences, Public Health, College of Nursing, and College of Education joined forces in preparing proposals. One key area that emerged during discussion was the longstanding problem of food insecurity during the pandemic. While many of the papers in this special issue address U.S.-based populations, they cover universal topics such as vulnerable populations, specific disease conditions, lifestyle changes, and the role of community engagement in addressing food insecurity, for example. Finally, this special issue underscores that food security and food sovereignty must be addressed together in order to solve the problem of food insecurity and improve global health.

In this special issue we examine the role that COVID-19 has on food insecurity and the downstream health consequences. There are five papers in total focusing on different vulnerable populations, health conditions, and ways of mitigating food insecurity through social action and food justice. Two papers focus on different vulnerable populations. In Rodriguez, Soca Lozano, Redwine, Rodriguez & Stern's paper entitled, "*Food Insecurity and the Hispanic Population During the COVID 19 Pandemic*," the focus is on the Hispanic population in the US and Puerto Rico. The paper pays particular attention to the recent impact of Covid-19 on food insecurity in this vulnerable group. College students are another vulnerable group that experience food insecurity. Debate, Himmelgreen, Gupton, & Heuer consider the issues of students' well-being, food insecurity and the impact of the pandemic on their lives in their article entitled, "*Food Insecurity, Well-being, and*

*Cardiovascular Disease: Implications During the COVID-19 Pandemic,*" Crowder et al also consider the role of expanded screening for food insecurity as critical in preventing chronic diseases. Finally, one paper in this issue considers ways of mitigating food insecurity, specifically through social action and food justice. Specifically, in their article entitled, "*Religion and Food Insecurity in the Time of COVID-19: Food Sovereignty for a Healthier Future,*" Schanbacher and Gray explore the role religious institutions might play in engaging community efforts, and thereby mitigating food insecurity, particularly during the current Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, all the papers in this special issue consider future directions, both broadly and specifically related to their topic.

### **Acknowledgment**

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