

A QUALITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE TO ASSESS AND INCREASE FOOD ALLERGY KNOWLEDGE TO CREATE A MORE INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

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INTRODUCTION

First Chance for Children provides various programs to foster healthy outcomes for children and families in mid-Missouri. The program is currently working to cultivate more resources to be intentionally accessible and inclusive to all families through an Inclusivity, Equity, and Diversity Plan.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The lack of awareness about allergies, allergic reaction symptoms, and allergy safe measures was identified as an area of improvement within the program and life threatening.²

PATHOPHYSIOLOGY OF A FOOD ALLERGY

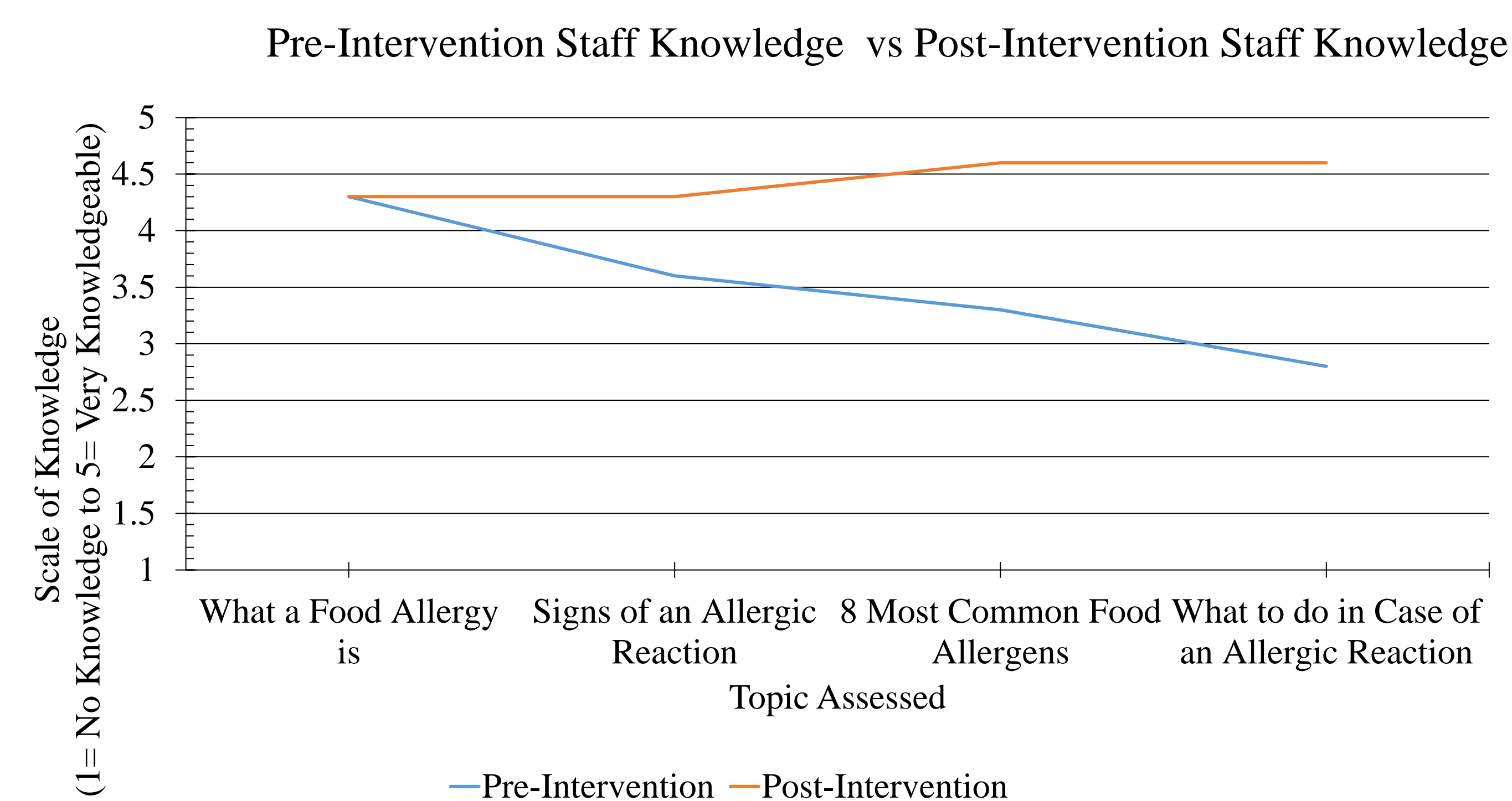
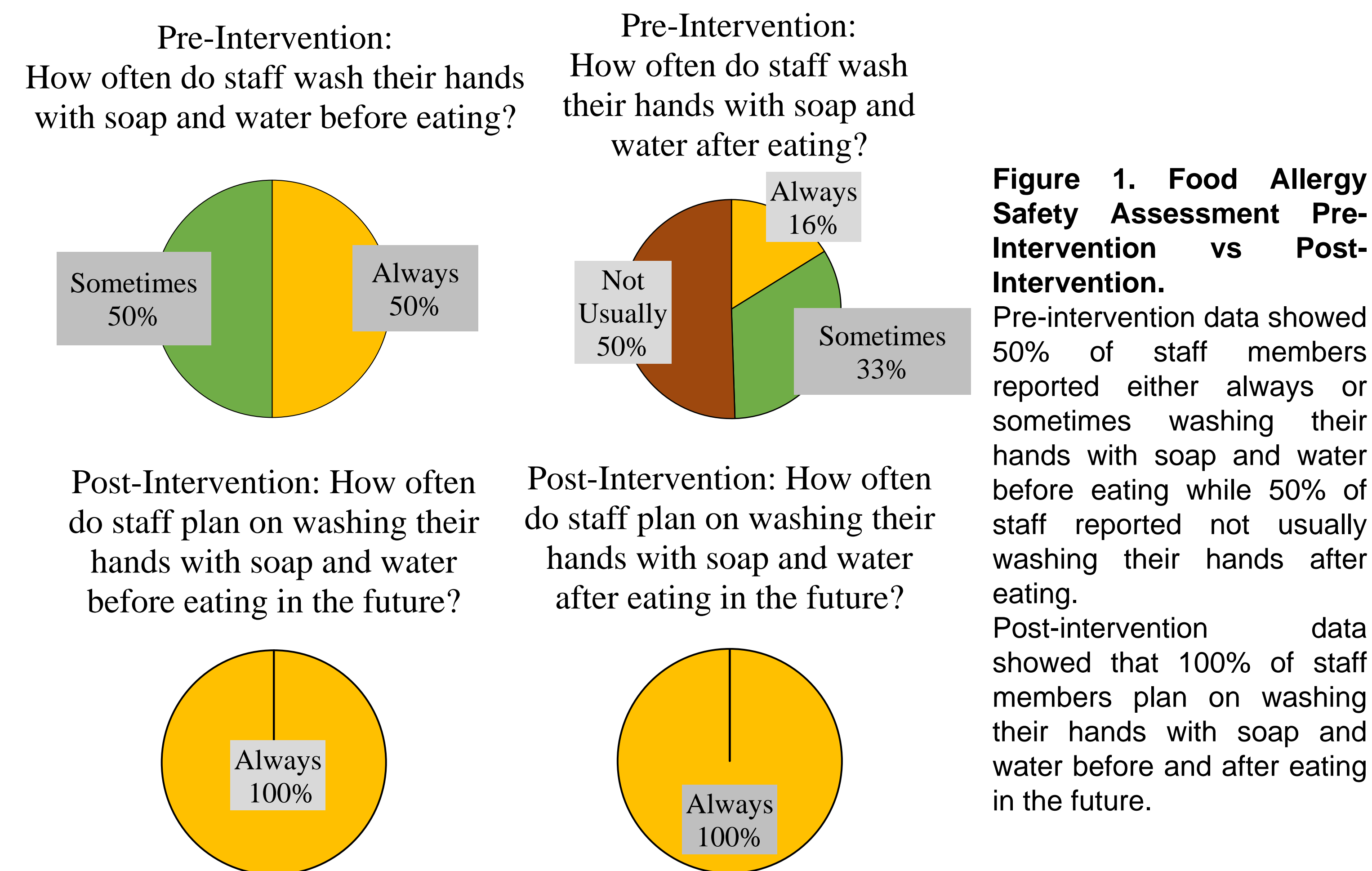
A food allergy is defined as a medical condition in which a harmful immune response is triggered in response to exposure to a certain food.¹ The triggering agent is considered an allergen. This allergic response is classified as a type I hypersensitivity reaction, also known as anaphylaxis and atopic reactions.

METHODOLOGY

- Food Allergy Knowledge Assessment.
- Interventions
- Post-Intervention Assessment

WHY THIS QI PROJECT MATTERS

First Chance for Children primarily serves families with children under five years of age. Data from a National Health Interview Survey conducted by the CDC found that children under the age of five had higher rates of reported food allergy compared to older children. Although most forms of food allergies produce mild symptoms, some reactions can be severe and life threatening.²



INTERVENTIONS

- Increase Staff Education.** Information sheets, group meetings, additional resources were provided to group.
- Provide Food Allergy Postage In Food Areas.** Information about food allergies and allergic reactions was posted in areas containing food.
- Provide Hand Washing Information In Bathrooms, Staff Breakroom, and Kitchen Areas.** Information about appropriate hand washing to remove allergens was posted in the staff break room.
- Regulation Of Food Containing Common Food Allergens.** Food items containing ingredients or proteins from the eight major food allergens were eliminated, moved to a separate location only accessible by staff, or labeled with additional information.
- Distribution Of Food Allergy Safety Information To Families.** Information sheets were added to kits to be distributed to families.

LESSONS LEARNED

Food allergies can greatly affect a family's well-being and peace of mind. As such, it is important to create allergy safe environments, provide information about food allergies, and educate parents and caregivers about allergic reaction symptoms. There are a lot of misconceptions about food allergies at First Chance for Children. However, staff members were eager to make simple changes in ensure a safer environment once their misconceptions about food allergies were corrected.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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