



FAMILY HEALTH CENTERS OF SAN DIEGO

WISEWOMAN – HEART OF THE FAMILY (CORAZÓN DE LA FAMILIA)

Million Hearts in Action

[Strategies for Achieving Million Hearts Goals]



Family Health Centers of San Diego (FHCS) provides affordable, high-quality healthcare and supportive services to everyone, with a special commitment to uninsured, low-income and medically underserved people. FHCS offers a WISEWOMAN program called Heart of the Family or Corazón de la Familia. WISEWOMAN, short for Well-Integrated Screening Evaluation for Women Across the Nation, is a CDC-funded program administered by community health workers and provides an evidence-based program to low-income women ages 40 to 64 who are uninsured or underinsured.

WISEWOMAN – Heart of the Family helps underserved women reduce their risk of heart disease and stroke through screening for risk factors, education about the signs and symptoms of heart attack and stroke, and treatment of high blood pressure and other risk factors. Untreated chronic diseases plague low-income communities across the nation. The program works to reverse that trend by actively seeking at-risk women at the point of care.

[Fast Facts]

- Family Health Centers of San Diego serves more uninsured patients than any other community health clinic in the U.S.
- Underserved women often neglect their own health

[What We Did]

- Identify and refer women to the evidence-based program. The target population was identified when they came into the clinic for a Pap test or mammogram. FHCS staff then referred them to the Heart of the Family program.
- Provide free health screenings. Women received free screenings for cholesterol, diabetes and high blood pressure. For most women, this screening is the first time they learn they have high blood pressure.
- Utilize community health workers. After the initial screening, community health workers help each woman establish an individualized care plan. Participants meet one-on-one with their community health worker at least five times throughout the year. Community health workers educate women about what blood pressure is, why it is important and how to reduce blood pressure through lifestyle behavioral changes. The health workers use models and pictures of the heart and arteries to show women how the heart pumps blood. Participants are taught how to read nutrition labels and understand hidden salts and added sugars. Women are taught lifestyle and behavioral changes to reduce blood pressure and other cardiovascular risk factors.



[What We Accomplished]

Nearly 2,000 women were screened for high blood pressure, diabetes and elevated cholesterol between June 2010 and June 2013. Among them:

- 36% were diagnosed and treated for hypertension
- 29% were diagnosed and treated for high cholesterol
- 19% were diagnosed and treated for diabetes

According to a survey of 47 randomly selected participants conducted by the Institute for Public Health at San Diego State University, 91% of respondents said the program helped them make positive changes in their health behavior.

“Our community is full of strong women who have selflessly dedicated their lives to the health and wellness of their family, friends and neighborhood. With WISEWOMAN – Heart of the Family, we help expand that dedication to the person most often ignored: themselves. By helping them look inward, we empower them to lead a healthier life and, by extension, empower healthier lifestyles in their community.”

- Janet Adamian, Regional Director, Family Health Centers of San Diego

[What We Learned]

- Build good relationships with medical providers. Medical providers have to buy into the program because they refer patients to the program. The program coordinator must develop a good relationship with the clinic's healthcare providers. In the FHCS D program, a community health worker regularly attends clinic staff meetings and provides program updates.
- Recognize and accommodate for challenges women face. Women have many roles in the family, such as head of household or caregiver. Often, they cannot come to the health center because of childcare issues or work schedules. To better reach women, we have health fairs and spread the word about the program through outreach workers.



[What We Are Doing Now]

To build on the program, FHCS D formed a Clinical Outcomes Hypertension subcommittee in September 2013 to address high blood pressure among the approximately 10,500 FHCS D patients diagnosed with the condition. The committee included representatives from medical leadership, nursing, facilities and information technology.

Interventions to reduce blood pressure included tailored letters, patient and health provider education, expedited follow-up visits for poor blood pressure control and automated phone calls.

Between March 2013 and March 2014, the percentage of FHCS D patients with well-controlled hypertension increased from 59.1% to 69.9%, exceeding the national benchmark of 65%. The significant improvement in well-controlled blood pressure from baseline to outcome demonstrates how focused efforts to reduce blood pressure in a community clinic can improve community health outcomes.

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