

# Caring for you.

With heart.



## Million Hearts Campaign

How can health providers across the country avoid a million heart attacks? That was the challenge issued last year by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with the Million Hearts® Campaign. Thanks to a grant from the Community Health Access Network (CHAN), CMC's Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) accepted and rose to the challenge (CHAN supports and administers HCH's electronic medical records).



Hypertension is a leading cause of heart attacks, so the team at HCH used the grant to improve the way they measure blood pressure and help patients with hypertension keep it under control. Their success was so dramatic, the CDC requested a write up on how they did it.

"When we started, 57% of our patients had a blood pressure below 140/90," recalls Tracy Tinker, MSN, RN, CNL, CDE, a nurse care coordinator at HCH. "Our goal was to get that up to 62%. At the end of six months we were at 70%."


The nurses at HCH started by taking a look at both how they measure blood pressure and what barriers their patients face in maintaining a healthy level. "We educated the RNs and they observed each other to make sure there's consistency and accuracy in the blood pressure readings," says Tinker.

The biggest changes came in patient education and communication. "Some factors, like access to healthy foods, were out of our control," says Tinker, "but we saw that there were many common themes we could tackle."

Providers and RNs realized that patients generally had low health literacy. Now, they reinforce the importance of taking medications and the risks of stopping and restarting. "Hearing the same message multiple times from providers in various roles has proven very helpful," she notes. They schedule patients with high blood pressure readings for more frequent follow up appointments. The HCH outreach team also meets patients outside the facility



to remind them of their appointments, the importance of taking medications, and to return the clinic before their prescriptions run out.

Health Care for the Homeless, which is based in the same building that houses New Horizons for New Hampshire, an adult homeless shelter, soup kitchen and food pantry, functions as a primary care provider. This allows the team to build relationships with patients and manage chronic conditions, contributing to the success of the Million Hearts® Campaign. "To see someone who has so many barriers and reasons why they can't manage their disease, yet they're actually doing it, is amazing." 

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