Reducing Deaths Following Heart Attacks and Strokes Through High-Quality Secondary Prevention

Public Health Problem

Cardiovascular diseases, mainly heart disease and stroke, are the leading cause of death for both men and women in Maine. Each year in this state, about 29,000 hospitalizations are due to heart disease and stroke. About $437 million was spent for heart disease and stroke-related hospital charges in 2000 alone—a figure that represents 26% of all hospital charges.

Program Example

The Cardiovascular Health Program in the Maine Department of Human Services, Bureau of Health, collaborates with the Maine Cardiovascular Health Council and the American Heart Association New England Affiliate to address secondary prevention. The state's Cardiovascular Health Program is partnering with the American Heart Association to provide regular training for health care providers to improve patient care. The American Heart Association's hospital quality assurance program, *Get With the Guidelines*, is being used. Nine hospitals now participate in the project, which improves patient treatment and follow-up after a heart attack or stroke. The Maine Taskforce on Cardiovascular Disease Prevention, the medical advisory arm of the state Cardiovascular Health Program, has created a system of enrolling patients in cardiac rehabilitation programs. Another partner, the Maine Cares Coalition, a network of provider-sponsored community-based support programs, is working to ensure that treatment for patients with coronary heart disease and congestive heart failure follows national guidelines. To date, more than 2,000 patients have enrolled in the Maine Cares Coalition program.

Implications and Impact

Maine's efforts demonstrate the importance of using recognized guidelines for primary prevention as well as for secondary prevention, which leads to reduced deaths following heart attacks and strokes. Already, statewide improvements have been observed in the increased use of lipid-lowering medication and reductions in cholesterol levels.

Contact Information

Maine Department of Human Services • Cardiovascular Health Program
286 Water Street, Key Plaza, 4th Floor • 11 State House Station • Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Phone: (207) 287-4624 • Web site: http://www.maine.gov/dhs/index.htm