



Improving Health Outcomes Through Partnerships With Health Plans

Public Health Problem

Cardiovascular disease, mainly heart disease and stroke, is the leading cause of death in Wisconsin. Cardiovascular-related hospitalization charges topped \$1.6 billion in the state in 2000 alone. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for both heart disease and stroke. One of every four Wisconsin adults report they have been told by a health professional that they have high blood pressure. An estimated 30% of people who have high blood pressure are unaware of it, according to a national report. Although 59% of people with high blood pressure receive treatment, only 34% of them have their blood pressure under control.

Program Example

Wisconsin's Cardiovascular Health Program collaborated with many public and private health organizations to increase the percentage of patients who have their high blood pressure under control. In just 1 year, these partners increased by 10% the number of health maintenance organization (HMO) patients with their high blood pressure under control. In 2000, the Wisconsin Cardiovascular Health Program joined the Wisconsin Collaborative Diabetes Quality Improvement Project, which has numerous collaborators, including a statewide group of HMOs and health systems. Participating HMOs represented 84% of the people enrolled in HMOs in the state in 2000 and more than 98% of those enrolled in 2001. The Cardiovascular Health Program asked that the 20 participating health plans with commercial enrollees collect 4 Health Plan Employer Data and Information Set (HEDIS) cardiovascular-related measures. These data provided a baseline assessment for planning quality improvement strategies within health plans. Among participating health plans, only 48% of patients were found to have their high blood pressure controlled. On the basis of this information, the health plans put into place strategies to improve blood pressure control. As a result, by 2001, 58% of patients had their high blood pressure controlled. The Cardiovascular Health Program is currently coordinating the development and launch of a cardiovascular risk reduction initiative among project partners. The initiative will address high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Implications and Impact

Wisconsin's experiences demonstrate the opportunity for state programs to serve as catalysts for health system improvements that lead to the prevention of heart disease and stroke. Public health programs accomplish this by serving as a neutral entity for convening health system organizations, sharing quality improvement data, providing a population-based perspective, and promoting health system changes that lead to better health outcomes.

Contact Information