



Targeting Diabetes in Populations Hardest Hit by the Disease

Public Health Problem

More than 8% of Florida adults have diagnosed diabetes, data from the state's 2001 Behavioral Risk Factor Survey show, compared with about 6.5% of U.S. adults. The complications are disabling and costly. In Florida, about 16 of every 1,000 hospitalizations of people with diabetes resulted in amputation, according to 2000 data from the Agency for Health Care Administration. Moreover, 31 of every 1,000 hospitalizations that resulted in death involved people with diagnosed diabetes. The average age of patients with diabetes complications was 65 years in 2000, an increase of 2 years since 1992. However, African American and Hispanic patients hospitalized for diabetes complications have suffered from death and disability at earlier ages than people in other racial and ethnic groups.

Program Example

The Florida Diabetes Prevention and Control Program educated key decision makers about the need to allocate funds to reduce health disparities related to diabetes. More than \$900,000 was allocated to six community-based Closing the Gap projects in fiscal year 2002–2003 to target diabetes in populations disproportionately affected by the disease. The Diabetes Prevention and Control Program provided the projects with guidance, technical assistance, and contract managers. National Diabetes Education Program materials were recommended for use in the community, and use of lay health advisors was the recommended community education strategy. The Florida Diabetes Medical Practice Guidelines were the recognized set of protocols for disease management and patient self-management education. Project staff have worked hard in these six communities to provide education and to raise people's awareness and knowledge about diabetes.

Implications and Impact

Program evaluations show that since the projects began, people's knowledge about diabetes has increased while their average A1c blood glucose levels have declined. For example, the Closing the Gap project in Baker County reported that A1c levels for self-management participants averaged about 9.42% initially but then dropped to an average of 7.96%. Florida has made significant progress toward achieving the goal of increasing by 10% the percentage of people with diabetes who have ever heard of the A1c blood glucose test. In fact, the percentage has increased from 22.6% in 1994–1996 to 24.9% in 2000–2001, state Behavioral Risk Factor Survey data show. During the same period, the percentage of adults with diabetes who had their A1c checked at least once increased from 13.2% to 67.7%. Additionally, only about 7% of adults with diabetes in 2000–2001 indicated that they had never heard of hemoglobin A1c (included as a response option when asking the number of times they had their A1c checked). These data indicate that the Florida Diabetes Prevention and Control Program has exceeded the initial goal for this objective.