

South Carolina



Improving Blood Pressure Control in High-Risk Populations

Public Health Problem

High blood pressure affects one of every four adults in South Carolina. Left uncontrolled, high blood pressure significantly increases a person's risk for stroke, heart attack, heart failure, and kidney disease. Only about 34% of people with diagnosed high blood pressure have it under control, national data show, and related hospitalization costs are high. In South Carolina, hospitalization costs for stroke alone totaled more than \$222 million in 2000.

Program Example

In South Carolina, many collaborators are working together to support the Hypertension Initiative, which aims to improve blood pressure control, especially in underserved, high-risk populations. The South Carolina Cardiovascular Health Program provides support to increase hypertension expertise among primary care providers statewide, particularly providers in rural areas and those with substantial numbers of Medicaid patients. Strategies include peer-led training on best practices for providers, quality-of-care monitoring, and feedback. The Carolina Medical Review, the state's quality improvement organization, is analyzing the South Carolina Medicaid database to determine how these strategies are affecting quality of care. About 50% of hypertensive patients have controlled blood pressure, according to baseline data from participating providers who are reporting on patients under active care. The Hypertension Initiative's goal is to increase this to 70% of patients. Collaborators include the Medical University of South Carolina, the Duke Foundation, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and the pharmaceutical industry.

Implications and Impact

More than 300 participating providers from 38 of the state's 46 counties are involved in these quality improvement efforts, which will affect about 70,000 hypertensive patients statewide. Data on quality improvements are being shared with the South Carolina Cardiovascular Health Program. In addition, this approach for improving quality of care has been adopted by the American Society of Hypertension.

Contact Information

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