

Grant Outcome Report

Improving Diabetes Outcomes in Northeastern New York

The Problem

Diabetes disproportionately affects low-income populations, which have much higher rates of diabetes-related complications and mortality. Seton Health is part of the Ascension Health system, which serves a large swath of poverty-stricken areas in northeastern New York. These areas are low-income former mill towns with higher-than-average levels of poverty, vacant housing, and female-led households, and low levels of education. In

January 2008, the New York State Health Foundation (NYSHealth) awarded Seton Health a grant to use an established parish community nurse model and its outpatient diabetes education program to create its Defy Diabetes initiative and address the needs of people with diabetes in the 21 ZIP codes served by Seton Health.

This project was funded under NYSHealth's 2007 *Setting the Standard: Advancing Best Practices in Diabetes Management* request for proposals (RFP). The goal of *Setting the Standard* was to move New York State's primary care system to adopt and spread best practices in disease management and establish them as the universal standard of care for patients with diabetes. At the time, multiple diabetes management programs already existed throughout New York State, along with established collaboratives to maximize the impact of these programs. Thus, NYSHealth expected the grants made under the RFP to advance these programs and build systemwide capacity to support, sustain, and institutionalize these efforts. The Chronic Care Model (CCM)—a highly respected and accepted framework for approaching the improvements sought through this initiative—was a major reference point in the RFP.

Grant Activities and Outcomes

Seton Health proposed to do the following as part of its Defy Diabetes initiative during the grant period:

KEY INFORMATION:

GRANTEE

Seton Health

GRANT TITLE

Defy Diabetes

DATES

January 7, 2008 – April 28, 2010

GRANT AMOUNT

\$562,554

FUNDING

2007 Setting the Standard: Advancing Best Practices in Diabetes Management Request for Proposals

- Reach 1,000 people through Seton Health's Faith Community Parish Nurse Program through health fairs, church talks, and healthy living classes;
- Engage 25 primary practices to increase compliance with the American Diabetes Association (ADA) guidelines; and
- Develop a Web-based system and data collection tool to track progress and outcomes.

Through the parish nurse program, Seton Health hoped to reach new patients and improve their self-care, including management of weight, blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels. Seton Health also hoped to see improvements in patient outcomes at primary care practices engaged in the program, using National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) guidelines as its basis for excellent patient care at these facilities.

To engage the broader community and increase awareness of the parish nurse program, Seton Health conducted 18 pulpit talks and 18 health fairs, and printed announcements in church bulletins and mailings in 6 interfaith communities. These activities reached more than 1,000 people. The project trained 16 parish nurses and 2 community health workers (CHWs) to implement the Defy Diabetes healthy living classes at their houses of worship, reaching 193 people. Class participants included individuals with diabetes, as well as those without. Upon conclusion of the workshop series, some of the parish nurses and CHWs held monthly support groups for the participants, and some parish nurses also provided one-on-one counseling to parishioners. The healthy living classes and related support groups and counseling were not linked to clinical services at Seton Health. If parishioners required clinical care, the parish nurses encouraged class participants to return to their existing primary care teams.



Pre- and post-test surveys of participants in the Defy Diabetes workshops revealed improvements in their awareness and motivation to make healthy choices over the course of the six-week program. Participants also reported improvements in their eating habits, including consumption of more fruits and vegetables and less red meat or fewer full-fat dairy products. They also reported some improvements in physical activity. Participants' body mass index, however, had not changed by either the conclusion of the six-week class or four months later.

Seton Health identified and recruited 14 nurse champions to help Seton Health primary care

providers improve their practices by following ADA guidelines for diabetes care and submitting data for NCQA diabetes recognition. The nurse champions used a chart assessment tool based on the NCQA recognition program to give providers feedback on their diabetes-related performance. Seton Health also purchased SharePoint software to allow them to collect data that would give feedback to providers. Together, the nurse champions and the Seton Health team conducted trainings for 32 primary care sites to introduce them to diabetes quality improvement practices. Through the work of the nurse champions and the team, Seton Health submitted 10 NCQA applications; a total of 7 practices achieved recognition.

Seton Health also intended to select and install a diabetes registry to track the patients served by the practices. However, after months of registry examination and consideration of the resource commitment required, the plan was put on hold.

The Future

Seton Health merged with St. Peter's Health Care Services and Northeast Health, Inc. in 2011, creating the Capital Region's largest and most comprehensive nonprofit network for medical care, primary care rehabilitation, and senior services. The board and system leadership are committed to achieving recognition for all of their network's primary care providers. Seton Health has also opened a new diabetes center, headed by the nurse practitioner who led the work under the grant. This new center will provide diabetes education and care management for patients with poorly-controlled diabetes.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

ABOUT THE GRANTEE

Seton Health System is a comprehensive community-based health care system, based in Troy, NY, that serves Rensselaer, Albany and Southern Saratoga counties from more than 20 locations in the Greater Capital Region. In 2006, Seton Health and the School of Public Health at the University at Albany, State University of New York published the first national enumeration study of parish/community nurses, titled "A Study of Faith Community-Parish Nurses in the United States."

GRANTEE CONTACT

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NYSHEALTH CONTACT

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