

Primary cardiovascular disease prevention is leaving the office

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Early results from HeartBeat Connections, a telemedicine program supported by the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation (MHIF), suggest effective primary prevention for cardiovascular disease (CVD) may be achieved with a team-based approach that integrates office visits with supplemental phone coaching. HeartBeat Connections provides dietitian- and nurse-led coaching over the phone to adults at high risk for CVD, with the goal of helping to improve and control key CVD risk factors. Gretchen Benson, RD, CDE, Healthcare Systems Integration Manager at the MHIF, will present six-month data from the program at the American College of Cardiology (ACC) conference in Washington, DC today.

As part of the broader Hearts Beat Back: The Heart of New Ulm Project, 1,035 adults aged 40-79 with metabolic syndrome or high Framingham Risk Scores were identified via electronic health record data and invited to participate in the HeartBeat Connections program. Over six months, the participants (333) showed significant improvement in fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity, stress reduction, aspirin use, and medication adherence. Researchers also noted a significant improvement in LDL ("bad" cholesterol) levels and smoking status—the proportion of adults achieving an LDL level

"Real-world, systems-based innovations like HeartBeat Connections can serve as a model to target and engage at-risk populations, thereby enhancing primary CVD care in underserved areas."

When it comes to primary CVD prevention, persistence may be key. Adults who engaged in five or more HeartBeat Connections coaching sessions showed a greater degree of improvement in LDL levels, medication adherence, and stress reduction than those who had fewer than five coaching sessions and those who did not participate at all. Improvements in the nonparticipant group, although less significant, may be attributed in part to the broader Heart of New Ulm Project (of which HeartBeat Connections is just one part), which provides health interventions throughout the community.

Provided by Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation

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