

New Project to Reduce Heart Attacks and Strokes in San Diego County

Regional project awarded nearly \$6 million Health Care Innovation grant

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Approximately 84 million people in the United States suffer from some form of cardiovascular disease, and about 720,000 Americans have a heart attack every year, which works out to one every 44 seconds. To address these alarming statistics, the Be There San Diego Initiative has been awarded a \$5.8 million Health Care Innovation grant for a coalition project to help reduce heart attacks and strokes in San Diego County.

The Initiative's program, San Diego: A Heart Attack and Stroke Free Zone, is a regional collaboration of health care organizations and stakeholders to improve health care delivery and patient outcomes.

The goal during the three year project is to enroll 4,000 high risk patients and lower their blood pressure and cholesterol levels through evidence-based practices and a better understanding of the importance of treatment adherence. The project will also promote heart attack and stroke prevention measures, test novel, cost-effective technology solutions and provide educational opportunities both for patients and within the physician community.

Partners in the Be There Initiative include UC San Diego Health System, Arch Health Partners, Scripps Health, Sharp HealthCare, Kaiser Permanente, Palomar Medical Center, Naval Medical Center, Veterans Administration, the San Diego County Medical Society Foundation, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, community clinics and others. UC San Diego Health System serves as the fiscal agent for the project.

"Health organizations that are competitive in the market will be working together for the benefit of San Diego patients," said Anthony DeMaria, MD, principal investigator of the Heart Attack and Stroke Free Zone program and cardiologist at UC San Diego Health System. "This approach will decrease our community's risk for cardiovascular disease and could result in saving millions in the county by preventing half of the heart attacks and strokes that would have otherwise occurred in the participating patient population."

Patients will be educated about the program, consented and enrolled through their physician's office beginning later this year. Participants will also receive blood pressure cuffs to monitor levels at home and work closely with a health care coach.

"Because it's a silent condition, we find that many patients are unaware of having hypertension, and only about 40 percent of patients diagnosed with high blood pressure take their medication, which can directly lead to cardiovascular disease. We hope through the Heart Attack and Stroke Free Zone program, we can increase this to 80 percent," said Katherine Bailey, executive director of the Be There Initiative.

The Health Care Innovation grant supporting the project is made possible by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) through the Affordable Care Act and is part of an ongoing effort to advance innovative solutions in delivering and improving patient care across the nation.

"The grant is going directly towards making it standard practice that patients at high risk for cardiovascular disease are identified through screening and receive and take the appropriate measures if they have high blood pressure or high cholesterol," said DeMaria, professor of medicine at UC San Diego School of Medicine. "We also want to motivate physicians from different health care systems to communicate and share data with each other, as well as work more closely with their patients to meet their goal levels. Together, we can significantly decrease cardiovascular disease in our county, region and nation."

For more about the Health Care Innovation Awards program, please visit

<http://innovation.cms.gov/initiatives/Health-Care-Innovation-Awards/Round-2.html> 

To learn about Cardiovascular Medicine at UC San Diego Health System, please visit

<http://heart.ucsd.edu> 

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