Evaluation of the Journey to Better Health Program

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BACKGROUND

Journey to Better Health (J2BH) is an innovative health education and social support program that builds partnerships with Howard County, Maryland's Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) to empower congregants better manage/prevent chronic diseases and reduce unnecessary hospitalizations. J2BH was launched in July 2015 and operated under Healthy Howard, Inc. in its first year and transferred to Howard County General Hospital (HCGH) thereafter.

J2BH has two components:

- Evidence-based chronic disease prevention/management educational programs
- A member care support network to provide social support to participants experiencing a health crisis using volunteer community companions

J2BH screened congregants of FBOs that signed a covenant with it for pre-diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. Eligible congregants were enrolled in Hype Down, an 8-week self-management program targeting hypertension, the National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP), a year-long education program targeting prediabetes, and the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP), a 6-week program targeting the management of various chronic diseases.

OBJECTIVES

IMPAQ International (IMPAQ) conducted a mixed methods evaluation of the first year and a half of J2BH to:

- evaluate the effectiveness of J2BH in empowering congregants to better manage chronic diseases and reducing hospital readmissions through social support provided by community companions
- identify strategies to improve the effectiveness of J2BH

METHODS

QUANTITATIVE DATA AND METHODS

- Participant-level data collected by J2BH which tracked enrollment, demographics, and pre- and post-program health and behavioral outcomes
- Descriptive pre-post analyses to assess outcome changes
- Return on Investment Analysis

QUALITATIVE DATA AND METHODS

- Interviews of program personnel, enrollees, and community companions
- Coding and summarization of open-ended questions and tabulation of structured rating questions

LIMITATIONS

- Exploring associations; not causality
- Small sample sizes

FINDINGS

JOURNEY TO BETTER HEALTH

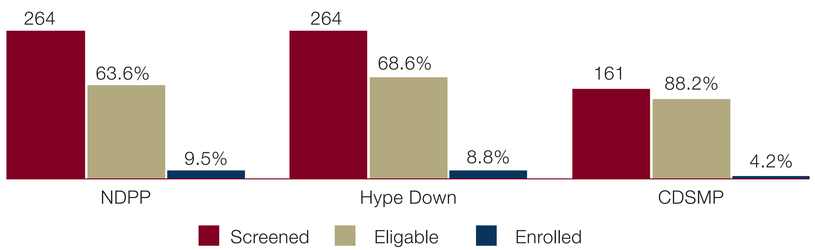
SIGNED 9 FBOs

SCREENED 426 CONGREGANTS

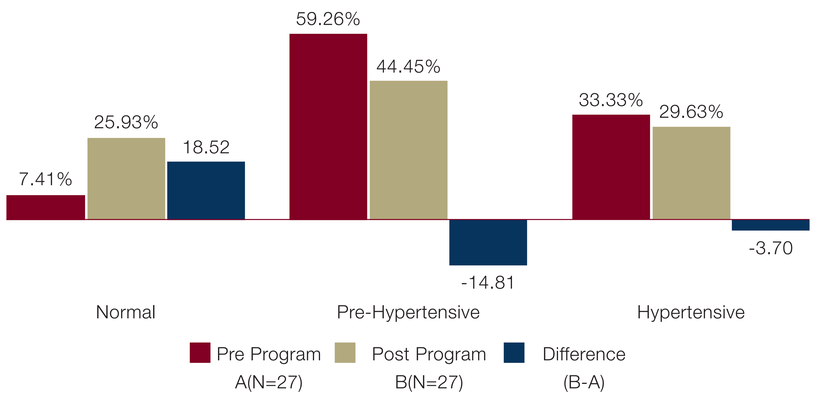
MCSN

64 MEMBERS SUPPORTED BY 17 COMMUNITY COMPANIONS

ENROLLMENT OF ELIGIBLE SCREENED PARTICIPANTS BY PROGRAM



PRE- AND POST-PROGRAM BLOOD PRESSURE MEASURES OF HYPE DOWN ENROLLEES (PERCENTAGE OF ENROLLEES WITHIN EACH CATEGORY)



- Weight of NDPP Enrollees. NDPP enrollees, on average, reduced weight by **4%** and lost approximately **7 pounds**. **22** out of the **29** participants (**76%**) reduced or kept the same weight between the pre- and post-program periods
- Health and Behavioral Outcomes of CDSMP Enrollees. CDSMP enrollees experienced:
  - slight reductions in Body Mass Index and Blood Pressure
  - improved self-efficacy

CONCLUSIONS

- On average, educational program enrollees experienced improvements in health outcomes and self-efficacy
- Challenges in recruiting sufficiently engaged FBOs, and adequate numbers of screening participants, program enrollees and community companions. Against a target of 50%, less than 10% of eligible congregants enrolled.

PROMISING PRACTICES IDENTIFIED BY THE EVALUATION

- Leveraging HCGH resources, such as the Pastoral Care Department and Wellness Center, for community outreach, partnership building/strengthening and program delivery
- Categorizing FBO partnership levels by congregation size to customize screenings and classes (e.g., offer services on-site or at the Wellness Center)
- Engaging congregations and congregants by customizing outreach and services based on need

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

- Continuation of promising practices
- Improved advertising of the program
- Increasing program awareness in the community
- Further motivating program participation and continued engagement of congregants
- Increasing J2BH staff size
- Paid patient navigator program where community companions are compensated for their time
- Refresher training or online refresher modules for community companions

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge Howard County Health Department, Healthy Howard, Inc., and Howard County General Hospital for their help in making this research possible.

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