Rochester’s High Blood Pressure Collaborative Receives More National Recognition

Rochester’s effort to eliminate health disparities through its community-wide High Blood Pressure Collaborative was recognized with the Innovation in Advancing Health Equity Award from the National Business Group on Health (NBGH). The prestigious prize, given to only four initiatives nationwide, honors the collaborative’s efforts to improve high blood pressure control in high poverty neighborhoods and among communities of color.

The health equity award follows on the heels of other national recognition for the business-led collaborative. This past July, the American Hospital Association honored the group’s Blood Pressure Advocate Program with a NOVA Award for improving community health. In November, Janet Wright, the executive director of the federal Million Hearts initiative, traveled to Rochester to applaud Monroe County’s “impressive” 13.7 percent improvement in high blood pressure control during the collaborative’s first five years.

A joint project of the Rochester Chamber of Commerce and Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency, the High Blood Pressure Collaborative is guided by leadership from Eastman Kodak, Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, Greater Rochester Health Foundation, Jasco Tools, LiDestri Food and Beverage, MVP Health Care, Nazareth College, Paychex, Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester Regional Health, the University of Rochester Medical Center, Wegmans and Xerox.

“This continuing national recognition reminds us how fortunate we are to live in a community that joins together to find solutions to our health care challenges,” said
The collaborative member Jake Flaitz, director of benefits at Paychex and FLHSA board chair. “By working together, we are making Rochester a healthier community.”

The award was presented March 3 to NBGH members Paychex, Wegmans and Xerox in Washington, D.C.

The Health Equity Award recognizes the collaborative’s focus on African Americans, Latinos, and residents of high poverty neighborhoods, which the group’s data show have the highest rates of uncontrolled hypertension in Monroe County. The initiative coordinates blood pressure screenings and educational events in churches, community centers, adult education centers, barber shops and beauty salons. Recently the group launched a medication adherence marketing campaign on buses and billboards and through radio ads.

In addition, the collaborative promotes wellness programs in worksites and works closely with medical practices, embedding patient advocates and deploying consultants to share best practices. To measure results, the group created a high blood pressure registry based on clinical data provided by 65 participating practices.

Based on national and local rates, one third of adults in the Finger Lakes region are estimated to have hypertension, defined as blood pressure of 140/90 mmHg or more. The condition contributes to one half of heart disease deaths and is a leading cause of stroke and kidney failure. According to a 2014 report by Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield, the cost of treating patients who did not keep their high blood pressure in check with medications was estimated to be $319 million for six counties in the Finger Lakes region, including Monroe County.

The National Business Group on Health leads initiatives to address health care issues facing employers by sharing best practices from the most progressive companies. Other winners of this year’s award are American Express, GlaxoSmithKline and Cigna. Follow this link for more details on the awards:


About FLHSA

Founded in 1974, the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency is one of the nation’s oldest and most effective regional health planning organizations. Located in Rochester’s Neighborhood of the Arts, the agency serves the nine-county Finger Lakes region. Through data analysis, FLHSA experts identify the most pressing health needs facing the region and then bring together hospitals, insurers, physicians, consumers and other community partners to find solutions.
Over the past decade, agency-led initiatives have helped to reduce lead poisoning by 85 percent, and in 2012, the agency received the nation’s largest Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation award, $26.6 million to introduce team-based, data informed care to 65 practices. Building on that success, FLHSA in 2015 was selected to co-lead a $48.5 million Practice Transformation Network initiative. For more information, visit [www.flhsa.org](http://www.flhsa.org) and the collaborative’s website, [www.ihearteatwelllivewell.com](http://www.ihearteatwelllivewell.com).