



CHW IMPACT: DIABETES

THE PROBLEM

The United States is home to 22 million people with diagnosed diabetes.¹ By 2050, 1 in every 3 U.S. adults will have diabetes.² Diabetes-related complications are common, in part due to complex care and management needs. People with diabetes must coordinate healthcare delivery with various providers, adhere to several concurrent medications, and modify their lifestyles to control the disease.³ These challenges are magnified for members of marginalized communities who face additional social, structural, and environmental challenges.

References

- ¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Diabetes Public Health Resource web page. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/statistics/prev/national/figpersons.htm>. Last updated December 1, 2015. Accessed February 20, 2017.
- ² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Diabetes Report Card 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pdfs/library/diabetesreportcard2014.pdf>. Published 2015. Accessed February 20, 2017.
- ³ National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. 4 steps to manage your diabetes for life. Retrieved from <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/monitoring-diabetes>. Accessed February 20, 2017.
- ⁴ Community Health Workers. *American Public Health Association website*. <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2014/07/09/14/19/support-for-community-health-workers-to-increase-health-access-and-to-reduce-health-inequities>. Accessed December 1, 2016.
- ⁵ Spencer M, Rosland A, Kieffer E, Sinco B, Palmisano G, Anderson M, Guzman JR, Heisler M. Effectiveness of a community health worker intervention among African American and Latino adults with type 2 diabetes: a randomized controlled trial. *Am J Public Health*. 2011;101(12): 2253-2260.
- ⁶ Hunt CW, Grant JS & Appel SJ. An Integrative Review of Community Health Advisors in Type 2 Diabetes. *J Community Health*. 2011;36: 883. <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10900-011-9381-7>
- ⁷ Palmas W, March D, Darakjy S, et al. Community Health Worker Interventions to Improve Glycemic Control in People with Diabetes: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *J Gen Intern Med*. 2015;30(7):1004-1012.
- ⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. HHS Action Plan to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities: A nation free of disparities in health and health care. Published 2011. Retrieved from https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/npa/files/Plans/HHS/HHS_Plan_complete.pdf. Accessed April 2, 2017.
- ⁹ The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. U.S. Government Printing Office website. <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-111publ148/html/PLAW-111publ148.htm>. Accessed December 1, 2016.
- ¹⁰ American Association of Diabetes Educators. Community Health Workers in Diabetes Management and Prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.diabeteseducator.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/community-health-workers-in-diabetes-management-and-prevention.pdf?sfvrsn=0>. Last updated June 4, 2015. Accessed April 2, 2017.

The Role of CHWs in Combating Diabetes

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are public health workers with strong connections to the communities they serve. Their close bonds with community members allow them to serve as liaisons between health/social services and the community, facilitating access to services and improving service delivery to better meet community needs.⁴ CHWs help patients navigate the healthcare system, communicate with providers, set goals, and make lifestyle changes.⁴

Through healthcare navigation assistance, community education, informal counseling, social support, advocacy and the promotion of healthy lifestyle habits such as healthy eating and exercise, CHWs help reduce the prevalence and impact of diabetes in the communities that they serve.^{5,6} Interventions by CHWs result in improved diabetes self-management^{5,6} including improved foot care,⁶ physical activity,⁶ appointment keeping,⁶ medication adherence,⁶ and healthcare utilization.⁶ Numerous studies have shown that patients who receive support and health education from CHWs experience improvements in HbA1c,^{5,6,7} blood pressure,⁶ and lipid levels.⁶ The positive effect of CHWs on diabetes has been documented in a variety of contexts, including high-risk African-American and Latino communities.^{5,6}

In its 2011 report, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends expanding CHW workforce, especially to reach racial and ethnic minorities and other underserved populations, to improve health outcomes and reduce healthcare disparities.⁸ The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act similarly recognizes CHWs as valuable members of care teams, and allocates funds to support and expand CHW programming.⁹ More recently, the American Association of Diabetes Educators issued guidance on the role CHWs can play in diabetes management and prevention, stating that, “Training and empowering CHWs to deliver current, accurate, and evidence based information can do much to benefit self-care behaviors, problem solving skills, and optimal outcomes in people affected by diabetes in their communities.”¹⁰

CHWs Addressing Diabetes in Michigan

CHWs have a long history of addressing diabetes in Michigan. In collaboration with the REACH Detroit Partnership, CHWs have helped people with diabetes patients achieve significant improvements in disease management and blood sugar control since the program began in the 2000s.⁵ Primary care practices and health centers are now integrating CHWs into interdisciplinary care teams, providing individual and group patient support. CHWs in Spectrum Health’s Core Health Program, Michigan Pathways to Better Health, Linking Clinical Care to Community Supports, MI Care Team, and the Southeast Michigan Beacon Project, among others, work directly with patients with diabetes.

The Michigan Community Health Worker Alliance (MiCHWA) works to promote and sustain the integration of community health workers (CHWs) into health and human services organizations throughout Michigan through coordinated changes in policy and workforce development. Learn more about MiCHWA at www.michwa.org.