

The Chronic Disease Care Program (CDCP) for Free and Charitable Clinics

Overview

Chronic disease, defined as a persistent, long-lasting medical condition that can be controlled but not necessarily cured, is the leading cause of death and disability in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that chronic disease accounts for 70 percent of all deaths in the U.S., approximately 1.7 million people per year. More than 133 million people, or 45 percent of the total U.S. population, are living with chronic disease with that number projected to grow to 157 million by 2020. Further, Americans in poverty and those with limited access to health care are more likely to struggle with a wide array of chronic health problems.

Though chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease and stroke are among the most common and costly health problems in the country, they are also among the most preventable and controllable. According to the CDC, the four most common causes of chronic disease are lack of physical activity, poor nutrition, tobacco use and excessive alcohol consumption - all of which are modifiable health risk behaviors.

The Chronic Disease Care Program at AmeriCares

With generous support from the GE Foundation, AmeriCares launches its Chronic Disease Care Program (CDCP), designed to build the readiness and capacity of free and charitable clinics (free clinics), that serve low-income, uninsured and underinsured populations, to more effectively address chronic disease in their patients. The CDCP offers two programs - a national demonstration on prediabetes and a statewide demonstration in Illinois on resistant hypertension. Both of these initiatives aim to improve quality of care and outcomes for patients through identification, use of technology and data, and implementation of evidence-based interventions.

Another key objective of the CDCP is to document and disseminate the findings of these initiatives to inform chronic care delivery strategies in free clinics throughout the U.S. CDCP clinics will be responsible for regular reporting on clinic-level, patient-level and quality of life outcomes. AmeriCares is collaborating with the University of Illinois at Chicago and leading researcher of free and charitable clinics, Julie Darnell, Ph.D., to support the research and evaluation component of the CDCP.

A total of fourteen clinics will be selected to participate in the CDCP upon completion of an application to AmeriCares and acceptance into the program (seven clinics focusing on prediabetes care and seven on resistant hypertension). Program strategies to effectively address these conditions in free clinic patients will include: routine screening/ identification,

referral into evidence-based interventions, patient education and engagement, and training for clinic staff. Additional information about each initiative is provided below.

Transforming Prediabetes Care Initiative: A National Demonstration Program for Free and Charitable Clinics

Prediabetes is a preventable health condition that increases the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke; 86 million people in the U.S. are prediabetic but less than 10 percent are aware of this fact. The goal of the Prediabetes Initiative is to increase the identification of prediabetes and improve health outcomes for free clinic patients with this condition. Clinics chosen to participate will receive training on the CDC's National Diabetes Prevention Program curriculum to implement lifestyle intervention classes at their clinic. The Transforming Prediabetes Care Initiative at AmeriCares is being implemented with the support of the American Medical Association (AMA). This activity is aligned with the AMA's strategic focus on [improving health outcomes](#), which aims to reduce the incidence of prediabetes in U.S. patients.

The ECHO Initiative: A Resistant Hypertension Demonstration Program for Free and Charitable Clinics

Hypertension is among the most common chronic diseases and a major risk factor in cardiovascular disease, stroke, congestive heart failure and kidney disease; one-third of the U.S. adult population is affected by hypertension. A subset of hypertensive adults are further identified as suffering from resistant hypertension, defined as a failure to achieve goal blood pressure when adhering to the maximum tolerated doses of three antihypertensive drugs. ECHO is an innovative model that uses technology to link primary care clinicians in medically underserved communities with specialist care teams at university medical centers to manage patients with chronic conditions that require complex care, such as resistant hypertension. The goal of this statewide demonstration in Illinois is to improve the treatment and management of resistant hypertension in free clinic patients, improve health outcomes for those with this condition and demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of implementing ECHO in a free clinic setting.

In addition to training and education for participating CDCP clinics, AmeriCares will offer the following support: data collection and reporting tools, grants to participating clinics, gift-in-kind donations of medicines and medical supplies, and technical support to facilitate the implementation of quality improvement strategies around chronic disease prevention and management.