Heart Health Awareness: Prevention Strategies in East Oakland

Chinyere Okereke
Leadership Education for Aspiring Physicians Post Baccalaureate Student, University of California, Berkeley

BACKGROUND
- Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States (1 in 4 deaths).
- High blood pressure is a condition that increases your chances of cardiovascular disease, heart attack, stroke, dementia and heart failure, if it is not controlled.
- Hypertension screening is very important because 1 out of 3 adults in America have it.
- Some risk factors for HBP are family history, being obese, smoking or being exposed to secondhand smoke, excessive alcohol consumption, poor diet, lack of exercise, and stress.
- Hypertension can be controlled by lifestyle changes and/or medications preventing extreme heart related health conditions.

NEED
- I chose this area due to the lack of adequate resources and the unequal rates of heart disease. I understand that detecting hypertension early can reduce the chances of developing major cardiovascular conditions that can lead to death. I believe I can maximize my impact by serving this population.
- The main ethnic groups in Oakland are White, African-American, Latino, and Asian, although the neighborhood where my project takes place at is 50% African-American, 39% Latino, 6% Asian, 4% White and 2% other.
- More than 40% of families in East Oakland live below the poverty level compared to the national poverty rate of 12.3%.

OBJECTIVE
- Develop a program that address the complex issue of high rates of cardiovascular disease in marginalized communities.
- Target: Transient, low income, minority populations in Oakland, CA
- Goal: To combat the high incidence of cardiovascular disease in vulnerable groups, by hosting hypertension screenings, fresh produce giveaways and heart healthy education sessions, in East Oakland, CA

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
- My project was divided into two components, a hypertension screening event and fresh produce drive with a healthy eating/lifestyle workshop.
- At the hypertension screening event we had three stations.
- One station where participants checked-in and completed a mini hypertension quiz to gauge their knowledge on the subject.
- Another station where participants got their blood pressure taken. There were two medical students administering blood pressure checks (each participant will get at least two readings).
- Lastly, a station for personalized consultation along with a dietary demonstration. Consultation included a conversation about blood pressure readings, referral (if needed) and an interactive nutrition demonstration that allows participants to test their knowledge of reading the nutrition facts and selecting the better option.
- Before leaving they went over their hypertension quiz, received a list of free and low cost clinics in the Bay Area (predominantly Oakland area), and received a brochure that included healthy eating tips, list of easy exercises to do on the go, outline of what hypertension is and ways to control or prevent it.
- For the healthy eating component attendees were provided with grocery bags, and access to a variety of fresh produce. They were able to get food for their families or self. Food distribution was accompanied by a demonstration on how to safely prepare food healthy meals as well as understand nutrition facts.

OUTCOMES
- 44 participants attended the healthy eating/lifestyle component
- 38 participants got their blood pressure checked
- 20 participants had hypertensive readings
- 8 participants had pre-hypertensive readings
- 23 participants had primary care providers
- 15 participants needed help finding a clinic close to them and PCP
- 14 participants said the reason their blood pressure readings were high, was because they forgot to take their BP medication. (We recommended they take medications every morning with breakfast, making it a routine. If they had a phone we helped participants set alarms on their phones to take their meds.)
- My hope is that, the tools program participants received, will allow them to be empowered to stay on track, with striving towards healthy lifestyles, that promote a healthy heart.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS
- The community partners I chose to work with were, Feed My Sheep and The Black Neighborhood, along with medical students from UCLA and UCSF.
- Feed My Sheep's Mission: To create access to good, healthy food in the community. We believe that access to nutritious food is a basic human right.
- The Black Neighborhood's Mission: To provide Black men, women and children with the knowledge and resources to become productive, stable and self-sufficient members of the community. We believe we can create the change we want to see within the Black community.
- Both organizations have missions that align with my project goals and serve similar populations.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS
- Host more events in different locations
- Add a stress management component
- Expand focus–participants and community partners suggested that the program should include dentists for oral exams and fitness trainers for weight management.
- Gain funding
- Inform volunteers ahead of time to leave their white coats, just bring badges, because I don’t want “white coat” induced hypertension, causing inaccurate readings.
- More medical volunteers that reflect the demographic we are serving.

THANK YOU
- UCLA and UCSF Medical Students
- Ms. Faye and Feed My Sheep
- The Black Neighborhood
- The Center of Excellence in Diversity in Medical Education
- Dr. Ronald Garcia
- LEAP Cohort 2018-2019
- Marcella Anthony