

Health Integration Project

HIP



Fall River, Massachusetts

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Population Of Focus

Patients of Portuguese Decent with Diabetes

The population of Fall River, Massachusetts is predominately represented by Portuguese immigrants from the Azores, Cape Verde, and more recently, Brazil.

The Portuguese culture has many protective factors such as the importance of family, strong adherence to religious faith and the value of hard work.

There are also risk factors including high tolerance for tobacco and alcohol use, the value of work over education, the authority of the patriarch of the family and the practice of keeping things hidden within the family.



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Implementation Practices

SSTAR has addressed many cultural issues of this population:

- Hiring staff at all levels throughout the organization that are fluent in Portuguese and sensitive to the culture.
- Materials are available in their language.
- Exam room size was increased to accommodate the practice of family members often coming to Doctor 's visits.

We chose to focus on the nutritional and dietary practices of this culture, particularly in those patients with diabetes.

Food is an important cultural focus at regular large family gatherings. Often the offerings are high in carbohydrates and fats. And it is considered rude to refuse food offered!



Implementation Practices

Our FQHC has two Nurse Case Managers, one working primarily with patients with diabetes and the other with patients with diabetes or other chronic health issues. Our Psychiatric Nurse is tri-lingual Portuguese and Spanish and formerly was the Diabetes Nurse Case Manager. The staff nutritionist focuses on simple, low cost, healthy eating.

Through identification, education and support, we want to ease diabetes management within this culture and help them find healthier ways to prepare their foods.





Challenges and Barriers

The primary challenge/barrier has been the amount of people we have enrolled who are Portuguese with diabetes and a mental illness diagnosis. There is often a reluctance in this culture to become involved with someone other than their Primary Care provider and it does take time to establish another relationship.

Our plan to address this in our second year is to actively recruit patients with a diagnosis of diabetes through our FQHC who meet the criteria of the PBHCI grant. General Wellness programs on diabetes and nutrition that are open to all may attract some from this sub-population.



Data and Collection Measures

Our Health Outcome goal for this population is to decrease the Hemoglobin A_{1c} level by one point in the target population through education, targeted dietary guidelines and support.

Informed Consent and HIPPA guidelines will be carefully explained with materials in their language as well as the use of an interpreter, if needed.





Data and Collection Measures

In addition to the data entered into the TRAC system, a separate data base was developed to more easily cross reference relevant data, including the health issues of our Portuguese participants.

- We will compare their outcomes to other PBHCI HIP enrollees with diabetes who are not Portuguese to see if specific targeted information leads to improvement.
- We can also compare their outcomes to patients of our FQHC with a diagnosis of diabetes who are not involved in PBHCI.



Successes to Date

We have enrolled a small number of Portuguese clients with diabetes into PBHCI thus far.

The client specific successes have included getting mental health medications reinstated so that diabetes could be addressed by the patient and providing the support to resume daily insulin management.

Once mental and physical health care was stabilized, nutritional support and other wellness activities could begin.





Looking Ahead

Our main focus over the next six months with this sub-population will be to increase the number enrolled.

We plan to speak again with Physicians and Nurse Care Managers to increase referrals to the program, particularly those with diabetes.

We will hold a consumer focus group to share our ideas and gather their suggestions for improvement.

