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## Population Health Programme Decreases Heart Disease Risk Factors



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A 10-year population health research project by the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation (MHIF), along with Allina Health, New Ulm Medical Center (NUMC) and the community of New Ulm, Minnesota was undertaken to gauge if heart attacks and heart disease risk factors could be decreased within a community through community efforts. Results from the first five years of the project have just been released.

The project called Hearts Beat Back®: The Heart of New Ulm Project (HONU) focuses on reducing risk factors such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, uncontrolled glucose, obesity, tobacco use, physical inactivity, low fruit and vegetable intake, and medication underutilisation/non-adherence. By deploying evidence-based initiatives through different venues within the community including health care settings, worksites, restaurants, and community spaces and events, the programmes encouraged individuals to participate and choose healthier options. De-identified electronic health records data were used to monitor how the health of community members fared and changed over the duration of the project.

Results from the first five years are based on data gathered from around 6000 people within the age group of 40 to 79 years. Findings were compared with data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination (NHANES) national survey.

The results show that HONU had a positive impact on the community's health. The percentage of people with normal blood pressure increased from 79 percent to 86 percent and those with total cholesterol under 200 increased from 59 percent to 64 percent. Fasting glucose and triglycerides also showed positive changes. In comparison, these conditions remained the same or worsened in the other group.

Abbey Sidebottom, MPH, managing scientist at Allina Health and lead investigator, noted, "This study shows that the health of the population improved substantially during the first five years of HONU. These results were better than those seen at a national level, which provides some of the first evidence that the community-wide prevention efforts of HONU are responsible for improving the community's health."

Mike Miedema, MD, MPH, MHIF researcher and cardiologist at Minneapolis Heart Institute® at Abbott Northwestern Hospital also notes that this research clearly demonstrates that a community's health can be improved by using a cardiovascular prevention approach.

The findings thus show that community-wide prevention efforts can effectively lower heart disease risk factors at a population level. Even small decreases at the community level can have a large effect on heart disease development.

Source: Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation

Image Credit: Wikimedia Commons

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