

Grant targets high blood pressure

Patti Singer, Staff writer 5:44 p.m. EST January 2, 2015



(Photo: Provided photo)

You may sit across from your doctor in the exam room as you talk about your health. But when it comes to getting results, you're really on the same side.

That partnership could be strengthened as a new grant from the Greater Rochester Health Foundation to combat high blood pressure gets patients more involved in their care and helps doctors use the best evidence to guide treatment.

"There's going to be a consistent way that doctors will look at hypertension, and it will be clearer for patients why certain medications are chosen," said Dr. Louis Papa, an internist and chair of the GRHF program committee.

The foundation has given the Monroe County Medical Society \$400,000 for a three-year project that ties the results of one group to the success of the other. The goals are to increase by 20 percent the number of patients who have their high blood pressure under control. At the same time, it seeks to increase by 30 percent the

number of physicians who use at least one evidence-based guideline in their day-to-day practice.

"It will require a team approach to getting blood pressure under control," Papa said.

The initiative involves 42 practices and 176 doctors — most of whom are employed by a health system — and is expected to touch approximately 100,000 patients.

While the foundation is supplying most of the financing, it is not picking up the whole tab.

"We wanted to make sure there was broad support from the providers and the insurance community," said John Urban, president and chief executive officer of the GRHF.

He said Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, MVP Health Care and Rochester Regional Health System and UR Medicine are putting in a combined \$200,000.

"We took this as a signal," Urban said. "This was truly a community issue that other people are willing to support."

According to the data from the Monroe County Department of Public Health, 32 percent of adults have high blood pressure. The condition is a factor in other chronic diseases, and improving blood pressure control was deemed a priority in the county's [Community Health Improvement Plan 2014-2017](http://www2.monroecounty.gov/files/health/DataReports/Monroe%20County%20cha%20chip%202013.pdf) (<http://www2.monroecounty.gov/files/health/DataReports/Monroe%20County%20cha%20chip%202013.pdf>). The goal is to increase the percentage of adults 18 and older with hypertension who have it under control from 66.7 percent to 79 percent.

"People don't realize that hypertension is a bigger risk factor for heart disease than cholesterol," Papa said. "Decreasing blood pressure five points has a huge impact on stroke, heart disease, heart failure."

Nancy Adams, executive director of the Monroe County Medical Society, said the GRHF-led grant is a complement to other community blood-pressure initiatives.

Following evidence-based guidelines is important because they're seen as a way to reduce variation in care that can lead to higher costs. But Adams said the doctors won't be practicing cookbook medicine. "We're not talking about you have to follow the guidelines. But consider it. Ultimately, the decision is between the physician and patient."

PSINGER@DemocratandChronicle.com

[Twitter.com/PattiSingerRoc](http://twitter.com/PattiSingerRoc) (<http://twitter.com/PattiSingerRoc>)

Read or Share this story: <http://on.rocne.ws/115Nltb>