



## Lunch with Leaders: Leading to Improve Community Health

11/18/2021

### Q&A Responses

- **anonymous asked: I would love to see community health workers be paid better/more similarly to those in other entities, as the value of their work is so important.**

Currently, few insurers reimburse the important work performed by Community Health Workers (CHWs) which greatly impacts their compensation. A list of the few states that have laws that allow for Medicaid and other insurers to reimburse for the CHW services is

at: <https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/pubs/docs/SLFS-Summary-State-CHW-Laws.pdf>

Penn Medicine's Dr. Shreya Kangovi's research shows the return on investment of CHWs and is advocating for a federal Medicaid reimbursement policy. You can find this research at:

<https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2019.00981>

- **Anokha asked: How are we engaging with the community to tackle the problem of Obesity epidemic?**

In 2007, LG Health started Lighten Up Lancaster County, a cross-sector collaborative to increase the number of adults and children in the community at a healthy weight. This group focused on raising awareness about the health risks of obesity and the importance of healthy eating and physical activity, provided educational resources, and promoted community resources such as parks and recreation centers.

In 2012, we received a Community Transformation Grant and shifted the focus to developing policies and an environment that supported healthy habits. We built school gardens, worked with employers to implement healthy vending options, and advocated for improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

At this time, we prioritize two key issues – ensuring access to healthy food for all and continuing to create a built environment that supports active living. We have sponsored a bicycle share program in Lancaster City, support Complete Streets projects, started a mobile fresh food pantry, and recently created a Food Farmacy to provide healthy meals for food-insecure patients with chronic diseases.

CHOP has created effective messages to prevent obesity in childhood and these can be found at:

<https://www.chop.edu/clinical-pathway/obesity-prevention-and-management-patient-education>. In addition, Penn researchers are partnering with the city of Philadelphia officials and policy makers to reduce the obesity epidemic by advocating for the creation of new farmers'



markets in low-income communities, developing an innovative program that allows SNAP (food stamp) redemption at farmer's markets, and creating new miles of bike lanes. Penn researcher, Dr. Christina Roberto, showed that a sugar tax reduced the consumption of sugared beverages in Philadelphia providing vital data to continue to support the sugar tax's role in curbing obesity: (<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2733208>)

- **Bryan Oteri asked : How has the IMPACT program improved community health engagement in our Philadelphia neighborhoods and how has this program helped other health systems address community health?**

Community health workers (CHWs) are trusted laypeople from local communities that work to help high-risk patients address social determinants of health such as food and housing insecurity. Research conducted by Penn's Dr. Shreya Kangovi published in [JAMA](#) shows that CHWs can help reduce hospital stays by 65% and double the rate of patient satisfaction with primary care. This research has served as a model for other health systems and state governments to create similar programs.

- **anonymous asked: What is being done for HUP Cedar to help elevate the quality of care to that received by patient's at HUP Pavilion?**

Ensuring that the quality of care being provided at HUP Cedar is identical to the quality being provided at all of HUP's facilities is a critical goal, high up on the priority list for the leaders at HUP. Many of the employees at HUP Cedar were part of a very different culture under the previous administrative structure – to say nothing of different systems, EMR's, and levels of investment. Great energy is being poured into training and culture change, and when necessary, bringing in new people to work at HUP Cedar. Change will take time. Measurement is critical since we have to have measures of quality to know if we're achieving quality. Finally, PHMC – Penn just started the new FQHC which will provide an outpatient home for people who need primary care. Hold us accountable please.

- **Greta G asked: There are so many needs in this area. What are some practical actions we as individuals or organizations take to help support this work.**

You can volunteer your time or talent/expertise to events and programs that are focused on raising awareness or maintaining health and wellbeing, educational equity, mentoring, and many others.. Penn Medicine's Office of Government and Community Affairs maintains a calendar of events that welcome volunteers at: [Community Events - Penn Medicine](#) In addition, the University of Pennsylvania's Netter Center for Community Partnerships' Penn VIPS Program offer additional volunteer opportunities at: <https://www.nettercenter.upenn.edu/what-we-do/programs/penn-volunteers-public-service-penn-vips/staff-faculty-and-alumni-volunteer>