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A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL OF COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS USING PATIENT STORIES TO SUPPORT HYPERTENSION MANAGEMENT: PRELIMINARY RESULTS

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Background: Uncontrolled hypertension is a significant public health problem in the U.S. with about one half of people able to keep blood pressure under control. Furthermore, the social and economic costs of poor hypertension control are staggering. Community Health Worker (CHW) interventions are a low-cost, culturally tailored approach to improve chronic disease outcomes.

Methods: This randomized trial conducted at two Community Health Centers (CHCs) in Massachusetts assessed the effect of CHWs assisting patients with hypertension. CHWs, trained in motivational interviewing, used video narratives from patients who have worked to control their BP through diet, exercise, and better medication adherence. Participants enrolled in the study were randomly assigned to immediate intervention or a delayed intervention (DI) (4 to 6 months later). Each participant received a DVD and met with a CHW 5 times (twice in person and three times telephonically) over six months.

Results: One hundred seventy-one patients were randomly assigned to one of two treatment conditions. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 79 years old (mean = 56 years old). Seventy-three percent of participants were Hispanic and reported speaking Spanish at home. The intervention group experienced a significant reduction in BP over the 6 month period of time they were receiving the intervention. At 6 months, the average systolic BP declined from 141 at baseline to 136 ($p < .0001$); while the average diastolic declined from 91 to 86 ($p < .0001$). During this same period of time, the control group did not experience a significant reduction in BP. The control group's average systolic BP declined from 141 to 138 ($p = 0.2076$) and average diastolic BP declined from 87 to 83 ($p = 0.2325$).

Discussion: Having culturally appropriate tools, such as narrative videos and CHWs trained in motivational interviewing, can be an important, cost effective aid to educate, support, and encourage people to manage hypertension.

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